

Brandeis University

Waltham, Massachusetts



אגרות צפון

The Nineteen Letters

OF

Ben Uzziel

Being a Spiritual Presentation of the Principles of Judaism

BY

Samson Raphael Hirsch

*Late Rabbi of the Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft
of Frankfort-on-the-Main*

TRANSLATED BY

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TOGETHER WITH A PREFACE AND A BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR BY THE TRANSLATOR

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גלח וידוע לפניך שלא לכבודי עשיתי ולא לכבוד
בית אבא אלא לכבודך שלא ירבו מחלקת בישראל

“ Before Thee it is revealed and known that not for my glory or the glory of my father's house have I done this, but for Thy glory that discord may not increase in Israel.”—MEGILLAH, p. 3.

*To the
Ever Cherished Memory of
My Mother*

*This Book is Dedicated in Filial
Love and Devotion*

THE TRANSLATOR

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

In giving to the English-reading Jewish public this English version of the maiden effort of the late great Frankfort Rabbi, Samson Raphael Hirsch, the "Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel," I am strongly conscious that I have performed a difficult task very imperfectly. The work, though limited in extent, and sketchy in proportions, is of great importance, both as regards its own intrinsic value, and its effect upon the history of Judaism. It was epoch-making in its time, powerfully influencing contemporary Jewish thought, and paving the way for the development of a mighty and imposing school in German Judaism; but its merits are not shown in their just light by a mere translation. To properly elucidate the remarkable and original concept of Judaism which Samson Raphael Hirsch employed for the rebuilding of the ancient faith upon modern lines, in noble spiritual harmony with its traditional foundations, would require an elabo-

rate and detailed commentary or treatise, an effort for which the translator does not, at this time, feel prepared, and yet without which the work is necessarily incomplete. The difficulties, too, of the mere translation have been very great. The author's German style is terse, energetic, and laden with thought, but it is a diction all of his own, complicated, and involved in parts, condensed to the extreme of brevity in other parts, and full of special terms and peculiar writings derived from the author's particular conceptions in regard to Jewish religious notions, or Hebrew philology. It can easily be seen that to render such a style into clear, intelligible, and idiomatic English, and yet to preserve, in some measure, the striking characteristics of the original, was a task of immense difficulty. I have endeavored to perform this task to the best of my ability. I have aimed to produce a version which should reflect, however faintly, the beauties of the original—its solemn earnestness and fiery eloquence, its thought-profundity and rugged directness, and yet should not be too alien in form,

nor too far removed from the customary speech and diction of English literary style. In this effort I have sometimes reproduced with literal exactness terms and expressions used by the author, and have again ventured to deviate widely from the original text. Such terms as "The All-One," "Man-Israel," and "Deed-Symbol," I have rendered literally, because, although unfamiliar to English readers, they are essential concepts in the theologico-philosophical system of our author; on the other hand, I have disregarded his peculiar writing of Hebrew words — "Yissroel," "Mitzwauss," "Edauss," "Yaakauw," and his use of the colloquialism "Haschem" for "the Lord," "T'nach" for "the Bible," and have substituted in their stead the forms familiar to us; for while Hirsch had good reasons, in his time, for introducing these peculiar forms, to use them in a modern English work would simply be to introduce an entirely unnecessary element of uncouthness and *bizarrerie*. I have also taken the liberty to add words and phrases, and to divide involved and complicated sen-

tences whenever I thought such action necessary to add to the perspicuity and intelligibility of the rendering.

I now commend my work, which, imperfect though I feel that it is, has, nevertheless, occupied most of my leisure hours during the past three years, to the judgment of the English-reading public interested in the thinkers of Israel, and the thoughts they think. If this version succeeds in drawing the attention of some to the life-work of one of the noblest laborers in the vineyard of Israel, "Dreamers of the Ghetto," called by shallow, carping lips; if it cause them to ponder a little upon the meaning of Judaism and its message to the world, my reward will be as great as I have dared to hope.

BERNARD DRACHMAN.

New York, Elul, 5658.

September, 1898.

SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Samson Raphael Hirsch was, indeed, a "prince and a great man" in Israel; a rare and noble figure in the Judaism of the century now so rapidly nearing its end. Our age, so barren of men of original and profound philosophic and religious concepts, of deep convictions and burning enthusiasm; so over-fruitful of weak and inane sciolists, who, parrot-like, repeat the semi-comprehended phrases of pseudo-religious materialism, because through them lies the road to place and pelf, and the approval of the rich and worldly; our age, that could so ill afford it, lost in him one who almost alone towered above the dead level of indifference and mediocrity, and waved on high the banner of Jewish science, Jewish loyalty, and Jewish idealism. Ten years have rolled into the abyss of the past since he took leave of earth; but to those who enjoyed the

inestimable privilege of knowing him, or of entering into spiritual or intellectual communion with him, his loss is as fresh, and the pain as keen, as though but yesterday had witnessed his demise, for the impression which he produced upon his vast circle of congregants and admirers was so profound, and the sentiments of admiration and esteem which he aroused were so sincere and ardent, that death alone could suffice to obliterate them. Samson Raphael Hirsch had also many opponents during his lifetime, and the aims and objects for which he toiled and fought with all the power of his restless brain and his fiery tongue, were, and still are, subjected to severe criticism; but in one point all, enemies and friends, agree, that his life was altogether great, that his view of Judaism was sublime in its intellectual grandeur and ethical purity, and that the manner in which he sought to realize it was altogether admirable, and adapted to confer glory and honor upon Israel in the eyes of the world. Nor did he live in vain or toil for naught. His life bears

the characteristic indication of the truly great, that it has been fertile in enduring results; he was not, like many so-called leaders, merely an eminent representative of principles, not actually upheld by those theoretically his adherents, a general without an army; on the contrary, he possessed the faculty of thoroughly convincing and winning his followers, of inspiring them with the same enthusiasm which burnt within his breast. The future of Judaism, of the ages-old historical Judaism, is safe in Germany in the keeping of those reared under the influence of his spirit, for he gave them that which alone can secure the well-being of a religion, profound attachment to it as the one priceless treasure of their lives, and an unyielding consistency and fidelity which will render permanently impossible anything like profane or sacrilegious trifling with the precepts of their most sacred heritage.

Nor is the influence of his spirit confined to the immediate circle of his own congregation, splendid though this latter be; far beyond the confines of the queenly city of Frankfort-on-

the-Main, where his chief life-work was done, throughout Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Russia, it has worked wonders upon the minds of Judah's children; and wherever Judaism is threatened, apparently in its very existence, and seems hopelessly delivered over to the twin destructive and disintegrating influences of modern anti-religionism and mediæval superstition and unculture, an approach to the ideal set by Hirsch seems the only way out of the almost insuperable difficulty.

Samson Raphael Hirsch was born on the 24th of Sivan, 5568 (1808), in the city of Hamburg, then, as now, an exemplary Jewish community, renowned for the great number of its pious and benevolent men and women. His father was a pious and learned Israelite, who, though a merchant, devoted much of his time to Hebrew studies; his grandfather was Rabbi Mendel Frankfurter, who founded the Talmud Torah in Hamburg, and was Assistant Rabbi of the neighboring congregation of Altona, for which service he never accepted any compensation. A grand uncle of his

was Rabbi Loeb Frankfurter, the author of the two Talmudic works, *הרכסים לבקעה*¹ and *קול יהודה*², well known in Rabbinical circles. The power of domestic precept and example in shaping the religious disposition of the boy was no doubt great, but there was soon added to it an influence far more potent in at-tuning his soul to piety and to that enthu-siastic faith in God and Judaism, which never left him at any period of his life. Isaac Bernays, of whom Israel's greatest historian, Graetz, says that he understood the impor-tance of Judaism in the history of the world far better than Mendelssohn, and that he pos-sessed the ability to inspire his pupils with joyous devotion to their faith, became, in the year 1822, Rabbi, or, as he preferred to call him-self, following the Portuguese usage, Chacham of the Hamburg congregation, and under the influence of his Biblical and Talmudical in-struction and earnest sermons the youthful Hirsch insensibly found himself growing dis-satisfied with the commercial career for which

¹ The Ridges Levelled.

² The Voice of Judah.

his parents had designed him, which dissatisfaction finally culminated in the definite resolve to choose the Rabbinical vocation as his life task. In furtherance of this plan he went to Mannheim, where, under the instruction of the venerable Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger, afterward Rabbi of Altona, he devoted himself assiduously to Talmudical studies until 1829, when he entered the University of Bonn. Here he came into close connection with a number of Jewish students, whose minds were full of restless and skeptical thought, and pulsating with strong ambition for careers of power and distinction, then, as now, so tremendously difficult for Jews to attain in Germany. They organized a debating society, and among the keenest and most brilliant debaters on all subjects, especially religious, was Samson Raphael Hirsch.

1mp Abraham Geiger was one of those students, and a warm personal friend and admirer of Hirsch, of whose splendid intellectual gifts, remarkable eloquence, strict moral principles and personal amiability, he draws,

in his posthumous writings, a most attractive picture. Strange, indeed, that two warm friends, issuing from very similar family environments, both sincere and both inspired by genuine desire to work for the welfare of their people and their faith, should have sought the realization of their ideals upon roads so utterly divergent, leading to goals diametrically opposed.

Passing strange, but still a phenomenon which repeats itself in every country and every age, and which we can, without difficulty, see in our own surroundings and time.

Hirsch had hardly passed a year at the University when he was called, in 1830, as Land Rabbi to the Principality of Oldenburg. In Bonn he had been brought face to face with the Jewish religious problem as it manifested itself among the intellectual classes. In Oldenburg he beheld it in all its difficulty and apparent insolubility among the middle and lower classes, the mercantile and laboring elements of the Jewish people. These twain experiences were undoubtedly hard blows to

his ideal, but, instead of discouraging him, they aroused his latent energy, and strengthened in him the resolve to do his utmost to secure the wide dissemination and propagation of the true meaning of Judaism, as he understood it, and which through hard study and profound reflection had already at that youthful period ripened in him to a firm and solemn conviction. The first fruit of this resolve was one of the most, if not the most, significant and characteristic of his productions, the epoch-making writing entitled "Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum, von Ben Uziel," which appeared in Altona in 1836, and which is the subject of the present translation. The fact that he published it under a pseudonym is characteristic for his intensity and singleness of purpose. Youth usually delights in publicity, and loves to concentrate the attention of the world upon itself, but he had no such object in view. He did not seek for fame, neither should his name, although his official position must have lent it some weight, assist in procuring a favorable reception for

his book. Not the name or position of the author, but what he had to say should attract attention, should give his co-religionists food for thought. But the fact of his authorship did not remain long unknown; the letters made a profound impression in German Jewish circles, and soon all knew that the youthful Rabbi of Oldenburg was the author of the eloquent and original defense of Orthodox Judaism. In the nineteen letters, which assume to be the correspondence between a young Rabbi called Naphtali (נַפְתָּלִי=Hirsch), and his youthful friend Benjamin, who, though originally religious, had, through contact with the world and the perusal of non-Jewish writings, lost his early convictions, Hirsch set up that view of Judaism called in Germany "Denkgläubigkeit," which we may translate as "intellectual or enlightened Orthodoxy," although he himself was intolerant of any name except Judaism or "Torah." The nineteen letters are a sort of modern *Moreh Nebuchim*, "Guide of the Perplexed," though very different in form and contents from the famous work

of the Cordovan philosopher, to whose theory of Judaism, its tenets and its law, Hirsch was strongly opposed. Like Maimonides, however, he addressed himself neither to the simple-minded believer, who found in the observance of his ancestral faith sufficiency of strength and solace for the battle of life, and nourishment for his intellectual and spiritual cravings, nor to the religious Nihilist to whom the whole of theology is but an exploded standpoint, but to the "perplexed," to those whose hearts still clung with warmest attachment to Judaism, but whose minds found much doubtful, incomprehensible, or seemingly purposeless in the faith endeared to them by a thousand ties.

In classic German, with a style oftentimes highly poetic and eloquent, and always impressive, and with masterly argumentation, he proceeded to confute their objections. Commencing with the demonstration of the necessity of the existence of God, as a *conditio sine qua non* of the universe, he follows with the postulate of the need of a human race to carry

into actuality the infinite potentiality of good in the Deity. But with freedom of the will comes the inevitable conflict between good and evil; humanity will not devote itself as a whole to the maintenance of the Divine law, the free will left to itself would soon produce an utter confusion of notions concerning good and evil. Hence the need of an entire community which shall dedicate itself entirely to the mission of teaching humanity to seek for the good, or what is the same, to obey the will of God. Such a people must have distinctive laws and customs to sanctify it and distinguish it from the mass of external humanity as especially consecrated to the service of God. This duty has been historically assumed by Israel; these distinctive laws form the ceremonial legislation of the Torah. Then follows the analysis of the Torah and the demonstration that every part is essential and necessary, either to the furtherance of the ideal of good on the part of mankind, or the establishment of Israel in its character of "servant of the All-One," and that no human

authority has power to abrogate any of the Divine institutions. Hirsch's system of what he calls the "scientific upbuilding of Judaism" (wissenschaftlicher Aufbau des Judenthum's) is somewhat peculiar. While he insists that the doctrinal and ethical contents of Judaism can only be ascertained by absolute objectivity of investigation into its Biblical and Talmudic sources, uninfluenced by prejudices or notions drawn from extraneous spheres of thought, he utterly refuses to consider the question of the authenticity of revelation and the binding character of Jewish codes. For him the Torah is axiomatic, as unquestionably real as nature itself. To doubt or question this would be to put oneself outside of Judaism. While the first principle is truly scientific and must, of necessity, be approved by all, the second principle can not but be a serious difficulty to many an honest mind. Nor can it be denied that in the practical application of the first principle, the objective investigation of the Torah, he was occasionally guilty of both philosophical and

philological extravagances, which were sharply and deservedly attacked by his opponents. Nevertheless, as a whole, his work is profound and acute, and will have enduring value.

The publication of this work marked an epoch in the history of Judaism in Germany, and, indeed, in the world. It showed that orthodox Judaism was not maintained solely by the superstitious, or narrow-minded older generation, who had never been initiated into the science and culture of the age; but that it could be warmly, nay, enthusiastically, upheld by one who had thoroughly acquainted himself with the most daring researches of the new time, and met them with equally bold and open argument. More on this account, even, than because of the convincingness of the general theory, or the brilliancy of the special argument, the letters made a sensation, and aroused universal admiration. The lofty idealism which pervaded his description of the Israel-mission, the emphasis with which he pointed it out as particularly the duty of the cultured and wealthy

to remain attached with entire and unswerving faithfulness to the religion and the people charged with so sublime a task, were admirably adapted to reach the hearts of the impressionable and earnest-thinking in Israel. A sensual or worldly-minded person found nothing attractive in the man or his ideas, but those possessed of higher impulses, and who seriously pondered over the problem of life and sought for light and truth, were at once won over by his profundity and evident sincerity, and among this best class of Israel he gained numerous and devoted followers. It was during his tenure of the Rabbinical office at Oldenburg that he received an unusually gifted and talented student, whose name was also destined to shine resplendent in the Jewish world. On the 8th of May, 1837, Heinrich Hirsch Graetz, destined to be known as the father of Jewish history, then in his twentieth year, became the disciple of the already renowned Oldenburg Rabbi. The impression produced upon the brilliant and earnest young thinker by his new teacher is well described in

the memoir of Professor Graetz by Rabbi Dr. Philipp Bloch, recently published under the auspices of the Jewish Publication Society,¹ and this description gives us an excellent characterization of the personality of Hirsch: "In Samson Raphael Hirsch he met a man whose spiritual elevation and noble character compelled his profound reverence, and who fully realized all the expectations he had harbored concerning him. Hirsch was a man of modern culture, and his manner was distinguished, even aristocratic, although he kept aloof from all social intercourse. He was short of stature, yet those who came in contact with him were strongly impressed by his external appearance, on account of his grave, dignified demeanor, forbidding familiarity. With great intellectual gifts, and rare qualities of the heart, he combined varied theological attainments, and an excellent classical education. . . . He was the only teacher from whom Graetz's self-centred being received scientific

¹ Index volume of Graetz's "History of the Jews." Philadelphia. 1898.

stimulation; perhaps the only man to exercise, so far as the stubborn peculiarity of Graetz's nature permitted it, permanent influence upon his reserved, independent nature."

In 1838 Hirsch published, as a necessary concomitant of the letters, his "Choreb—Essays on Yissroel's Duties in the Dispersion,"¹ which is a text-book on Judaism for the educated youth of Israel. Each law, ceremonial, ethical, or devotional, is thoroughly explained according to the part which it takes in the vast edifice of the ordinances designed to protect Israel in its devotion to the God-idea, or to assist in the diffusion of Jewish spiritual and ethical truth. In 1839 he published "First Communications from Naphtali's Correspondence."² This was a polemical essay against the reforms of Holdheim and others, and in it he showed himself a master of controversy. With incontrovertible reasoning and biting satire he exposed the utter hollowness and unworthiness of the so-called "Jewish re-

¹ Versuche über Jissroel's Pflichten in der Zerstreung.

² Erste Mittheilungen aus Naphtali's Briefwechsel.

forms," as compared with the old, unadulterated Judaism, and that the latter alone could enable Israel to fulfill its mission. In 1841 he was elected Land-Rabbi of the Hanoverian districts of Aurich and Osnabrück, with his residence in Emden.

In 1844 appeared "Second Communications from a Correspondence Concerning the most Recent Jewish Literature,"¹ which contained a vigorous polemic against the contemporary reform movement in Judaism. In 1846 he received the highest compliment which could be paid to an orthodox Rabbi by being called to the Rabbinate of Nicolsburg in Moravia, which such distinguished Talmudists and representatives of the old school as Rabbi Mordechai Baneth and Rabbi Nahum Trebitsch had held. That such a community should have at that period selected a man of modern culture as their spiritual head, without any suspicion of the genuineness of his piety, was, in itself, exceptional, and a high honor; but it

¹ Zweite Mittheilungen aus einem Briefwechsel über die neueste jüdische Literatur.

was succeeded the next year by a still greater distinction, when he was installed as Land-Rabbi of Moravia and Austrian Silesia. This showed the high repute in which both his learning and piety stood in communities of unquestioned orthodoxy. In Austria he passed five busy and useful years in the reorganization of the Jewish congregations, the instruction of numerous disciples, and also, at one time in public politics, as a member of the Moravian Parliament. In 1851 he did the most heroic deed of his life; a deed which demonstrated most unmistakably that Judaism and truth only, not worldly glory or reward, were his life's single purpose. At that time Frankfort-on-the-Main was, as regards its Jewish congregation, entirely in the hands of the reformers. Frankfort, ranking with Worms as the oldest of South German communities, where our ancestors had, during the dark mædieval days, shown such patient endurance and active heroism in the cause of the sacred faith, was now given over to the reign of superficial and irreverent innovators. Eleven sincerely pious men

only had withdrawn from the general community and founded the organization which they did not even venture to call a congregation, but modestly styled a society, "Israelitische Religions Gesellschaft."¹ These eleven timidly and hesitatingly sent a request to the Chief Rabbi of Moravia and Silesia to be their guide and adviser, hoping that his well-known Jewish enthusiasm, and his financial position, which permitted him to be independent, would, *perhaps*, induce him to accept their call. And he accepted it. The recognized head of Judaism in two great provinces, clothed with state authority, loved and honored by his congregations, laid down his brilliant and lucrative position in order to accept a questionable place as Rabbi of a small group in a great city, where the Jewish community at large was thoroughly organized under other, and hostile, leadership. It was a wise and far-seeing step. Hirsch recognized that here in the heart of Germany was the spot where the best and most substantial work could be done for Judaism, for, if he

¹ Israelitish Society for Religion.

could materially elevate the cause of conservatism in Germany, it would inevitably be productive of the most beneficial results in all those neighboring regions which look up to Germany as the model of culture and enlightenment.

His work in Germany was blessed to a degree far beyond what he could have anticipated.

Little by little, through hard, unceasing toil and struggle, he succeeded in developing new Jewish life, and in organizing a model orthodox congregation, numbering some five hundred of the best Jewish families of the place, and provided with all necessary institutions in the most splendid manner. Nor did he confine his efforts to the synagogue; he succeeded in organizing two schools, "Bürgerschule" and "Realschule," in which a thorough Jewish training goes hand in hand with the secular education demanded by the age, thereby securing the youth and thoroughly preparing them to take the place in the congregation occupied by their parents. As conscientious and careful teacher, as eloquent and brilliant preacher,

he labored for the advancement of his own congregation, as learned and instructive writer for Judaism in general. As writer his efforts were distributed between contributions to the columns of the "Jeshurun," established in 1854, and independent works. In the twelve years from 1866 to 1878 he published his masterly "Translation of the Pentateuch with Commentary."¹ The leading principle of this great work is to prove the historical unity of Judaism, that it can not be divided into different forms and distinct periods of development, but that its latest manifestations are the logical and necessary postulates of Biblical revelation. During all these years he was battling for liberty of conscience to secure the abrogation of the law, designed in the interests of order and system, but iniquitous in its undesigned consequences, compelling Israelites to remain contributing members of the local congregations, even when these latter had departed from the standards of religious duty. These efforts were finally crowned with success

¹ Uebersetzung und Erklärung des Pentateuch. 2

when the bill introduced by Lasker in the German Parliament, permitting Israelites to sever their connection with the congregation without leaving Judaism, became a law on the 28th of July, 1876. Hirsch was forced to this step by the unreasonable actions of the reform Jewish communal authorities of Frankfort, who refused his congregation absolutely necessary privileges, even after it had swelled to hundreds of families. On this subject he wrote two essays, "The Principle of Religious Liberty,"¹ 1874, and "On Leaving the Congregation,"² 1876.

He did not find universal approval of this step, however, even among the orthodox. His most notable opponent was Rabbi S. B. Bamberger, of Würzburg, with whom he had a warm controversy, and a large section of the orthodox Jews under leadership of Dr. Hurwitz remained in connection with the main body of the Frankfort community. In 1882 appeared his "Translation and Explana-

¹ Das Princip der Gewissensfreiheit.

² Der Austritt aus der Gemeinde.

tion of the Psalms.”¹ This work is carried out in accordance with his established views, and is distinguished by elegance of rendering, a painstaking attempt to penetrate the innermost meaning of each psalm, and a scrupulous adherence to the received text. His effort to find symbolical meanings in the enigmatical superscriptions can not, however, be considered particularly successful. In 1884 he published an essay “On the relations of the Talmud to Judaism,”² to defend the Talmudic literature against the vile slanders which anti-Semitic writers were then already beginning to circulate. After this he did but little, the state of his health precluding active literary or ministerial work. He left, however, in manuscript a translation and explanation of the prayer-book, which has since been published. In this connection it is interesting to note, as an illustration of the high repute in which he stood among the vast body of his co-religionists in the Russian empire, that shortly after

¹ Uebersetzung und Erklärung der Psalmen.

² Ueber die Beziehungen des Talmuds zum Judenthum.

his death a translation of the "Nineteen Letters" into classic Hebrew by M. S. Aronsohn appeared in Wilna, and within a few months several editions were exhausted. He died with the dying year, quietly and painlessly, December 31, 1888. Such was the life and such the work of one who was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable figures in Israel's gallery of great men during the present century. Like all great men he had his faults. He was an extremist, but only extremists achieve success. The undecided and weak-kneed compromisers can never control, but are always controlled by their surroundings; but he was a master-mind who led his contemporaries, and his was a powerful and unyielding will, which stamped upon his time the impress of his ideas and convictions. The secret of his success lay, in addition to his own personality, in the absolute consistency of his religious system. His doctrine of consistent obedience to the will of God and the ceremonial law, as a part of that will, in order thereby to accomplish the mission of Israel, was convincing to

the minds of thousands, and inspired them with enthusiasm and devotion.

He covered orthodox Judaism with glory by demonstrating that the old synagogue ritual, so bitterly attacked and decried, not only best expressed the true spirit of Judaism, but could be carried out in a highly dignified, impressive, and æsthetic manner. He has been accused by advocates of the so-called Radical Judaism of making the synagogue service an antiquarian show. This accusation is, however, utterly superficial. Whatever of the antique his synagogue service presented was due, not to his inception, but to the laws which, as a true Israelite, he was bound to hold sacred and to obey. The service in radical temples is undoubtedly not at all antiquarian. It is modern, but because it is a purely modern conventional arrangement, with very much of the nineteenth century in it, but very little of Judaism and its sacred heritage of inviolable law. The credit of having boldly taken his standpoint within, not without, Judaism, and having elevated and glorified it by demon-

strating its intrinsic beauty and merit, and its own native adequacy for every spiritual want of humanity, will forever belong to Samson Raphael Hirsch, and his name will live imperishable in the history of Israel as one who was in every fiber of his being a Jew, an idealist, and a true friend of mankind.

THE TRANSLATOR.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

These letters came into my hands as the legacy of a dear friend. Much of their contents attracted me greatly, and altogether they appeared to me to consider many subjects of high importance from such new and unusual points of view, that I hope by placing them before my brethren to earn their thanks, even if all of the sentiments therein expressed should not meet with universal approval.

The essays alluded to in the last letter are also extant; and I desire the publication of these letters to be considered as a sort of question to the public, whether I should also publish those essays. The voices which will be heard in regard to these letters will also determine me in reference to those writings.

Should the essays appear, then these letters will take the place of the introductory outlines with which, according to the nineteenth letter, the author had intended to preface his book.

As for the letters themselves, I give them just as I found them, and have not even taken the liberty, considering that they are the work of another, to improve here and there occasional awkwardnesses of style, fearing that I might perhaps at the same time obliterate some essential peculiarity. Out of a subsequently found later letter of Naphtali to Benjamin, who appears to have communicated to him the judgment of a friend concerning this correspondence, I think it not improper to quote here the following passage :

“ Do not forget, my dear Benjamin, that I did not attempt in the sketches to map out for you an accurate design of the entire ground-plan and superstructure, but only a general outline of the edifice of Judaism. I have only led you through one majestic nave of the edifice, from which you can form a partial conception of the imposing whole. I desired to familiarize your mind and heart at first only with one chief idea of Judaism, one which should lead us most speedily to the sought-for goal, and could not therefore con-

sider all that which your friend otherwise would be right in missing."

To this I would only add the request to reserve one's judgment concerning special points in these letters until one has read them completely, and pursued further the superficially suggested ideas. I, at least, while at first not a little amazed at many statements, learned subsequently to think quite differently concerning them; much, especially of the contents of the thirteenth and fourteenth letter, I could only comprehend after I had seen the essays.

Finally, I would express the wish that I may not be deceived in the opinion that this correspondence may contain the impulse to much good, and that through the judgment of able and sagacious men I may feel myself encouraged also to publish the essays.

THE AUTHOR.

THE NINETEEN LETTERS OF BEN UZIEL

FIRST LETTER.

MY DEAR NAPHTALI :

When, recently, on the occasion of your trip through the town of my residence, we were privileged to meet again, after many years of separation, for a short fleeting hour, you did not imagine, my dear Naphtali, what interest the subject of our conversation had—and, indeed, still has—for me. You found me so changed in my religious views and practices that, despite your habitual tolerance, you could not suppress the questions which rose, as it were, spontaneously to your lips, “Since when?” and “Why?” As answer I gave you a whole series of accusations against Judaism, concerning which my eyes had been

opened by reading and contact with the world since I had left home and parents.

You listened quietly to my speech, and, when I had done, replied, "Do you believe that you really understand the object which you are thus condemning? Have you acquired with your own eyes, and by dint of honest, earnest investigation, an actual understanding of a matter which, inasmuch as it is the holiest and most important consideration of our life, should at least not be cast aside thoughtlessly and unreflectingly?" You showed me that the only sources of my knowledge were, on the one hand, the mechanical practice of parental customs and a few imperfect and undigested fragments of the Bible and Talmud acquired from Polish teachers, and, on the other hand, Christian writers, modern reformers, and especially that view of life which our present age has brought forth, and which has, as its chief endeavor, the suppression of the inner voice of conscience in favor of the external demands of comfort and ease.

I was forced to confess the insufficiency of my

knowledge, begged you for instruction; then the coachman called, and, in bidding me good-by, you had only time to call "in writing." You have, therefore, made me distrustful, my dear Naphtali, of the opinions I have hitherto held, but you have not refuted them, nor given me better ones in their stead. I, therefore, take advantage of your kind permission, and repeat to you in writing a number of my charges, not for the purpose of defending my present mode of life, but in the sincere desire of information and guidance. Every religion, I believe, should bring man nearer to his ultimate end. This end, what else can it be than the attainment of happiness and perfection?

But if we take these principles as a criterion for Judaism, what utterly depressing results do we not obtain? To what happiness does Judaism conduct its professors? From time immemorial misery and slavery have been their lot; misunderstood or despised by the other nations, and while the rest of mankind mounted to the summit of culture, prosperity, and fortune, its adherents remained always

poor in everything which makes human beings great and noble, and which beautifies and dignifies existence.

The Law itself interdicts all enjoyments, is a hindrance to all the pleasures of life. For two thousand years we are as the plaything of fate, as a ball tossed from hand to hand, even in the present time driven from all the paths of happiness. And as for the perfecting of human acquirements, what culture, what conquests in the domain of science, art, or invention, in a word, what great achievements have Jews wrought compared with Egyptians, Phœnicians, Greeks, Romans, Italians, French, English, or Germans?

Robbed of all the characteristics of nationality, we are, nevertheless, deemed a nation, and every one of us is by his very birth doomed to form an additional link in this never-ending chain of misery. The Law is chiefly at fault for all this: by enjoining isolation in life, and thereby arousing suspicion and hostility; by breaking the spirit through the inculcation of humble submissiveness, thereby inviting con-

tempt ; by discouraging the pursuit of the formative arts ; by dogmas which bar the way of free speculation, and by removing, through the separation in life, every incentive to exertion in science and art, which, therefore, do not flourish among us.

As for our own lore, it perverts the mind and leads it astray into subtleties and the *minutiæ* of petty distinctions, until it becomes incapable of entertaining simple and natural opinions, so that I have always wondered not a little how you, who have taste and understanding for the beauties of Virgil, Tasso, and Shakespeare, and who are able to penetrate into the consistent structures of Leibnitz or Kant, can find pleasure in the rude and tasteless writings of the Old Testament, or in the illogical disputations of the Talmud ?

And what effect has it, the Law, upon heart and life ? The broad principles of universal morality are narrowed into anxious scrupulosity about insignificant trifles ; nothing is taught except to fear God, everything, even the pettiest details of life, is referred directly

to God; life itself becomes a continuous monastic service, nothing but prayers and ceremonies; he the most praiseworthy Jew, who lives most secluded, and knows least of the world, though he permits it to support him, but wastes his life in fasting and praying, and the perusal of senseless writings. Look yourself at the book which is put into our hands as the "Path of Life,"¹ and which contains the whole duty of the Jew, what else does it teach except praying and fasting and the keeping of holidays? Where is there one word of the active, busy life around us? And this, too, just in our time? Why, it is quite impossible to keep these laws intended for an entirely different time. What limitation in travelling, what embarrassment in association with Gentiles, what difficulties in every business!

Please, please do not point, for an answer, to the reformistic tendencies of the age, how little by little everything is being cut away which does not harmonize with the conception of the destiny of man or the needs of the

¹—אורת חיים

time. Is not this in itself a step outside of Judaism?

Should one not rather, if one is a Jew, consistently carry out these notions, instead of attaching oneself to such contradictory principles, by which nothing can be attained except capricious, fortuitous patchwork?

And, besides, for this very reform, everything is lacking, unity, legally constituted legislative bodies, authority. All of these efforts are only the doings of individuals, the most divergent opinions prevail among the Rabbis and preachers; while some as enlightened men of the time tear down, others hold fast to the rotten building, and wish themselves to be buried under it. I myself recently saw a young Rabbi who, whenever he travels, in simple-minded piety, contents himself with prisoner's fare, and whom, when one visits him, one may still find poring over the folios of the 'Talmud; nay, he is even said to grieve earnestly over the fact that some of the members of his congregation are so far advanced in enlightenment that they do not close their

SECOND LETTER.

Because I answer you so soon, dear Benjamin, do not think I have not maturely reflected upon the subjects which you put before me in your letter.

You know that in my earliest youth these subjects employed my soul, that, reared by enlightened but God-fearing parents, the voices of T'nach¹ early spoke to my spirit, and that, of my own free will, when my intelligence had already matured, I permitted the T'nach to lead me to Gemara²—that not external necessity caused me to select the vocation of Rabbi, but my own inner life-plan. So much the more do I wonder that you can fear to find in me the hypocrisy of office. I would be angry with you, were you not my friend, were I not yours. But that is the curse of the time and the fatal obstacle to beneficent activity on the part of those in official station, that that

¹ Bible. ² Talmud.

which should be the treasured possession of all, has become the attribute of office, so that people are inclined to look upon the universal rule of life as the mere regulation of an order and say, "Yes, *he* must be so, must speak so, his position—his bread—demands it." Sad degradation of the age! It seems quite natural that a man should sell everything, his most cherished individuality, his inmost convictions, for bread, and everything is deemed excusable if it but yield bread, bread! But perhaps you rejoice, Benjamin, and thousands with you, that all of this has been forced to flee for refuge within the limits of an official class, for in this you may see a hope—and indeed a prospect—that it will soon be expelled even from there, and the consistent process of erecting life upon the twin foundation principles of happiness and perfection, suspended between heaven and earth, and supported by themselves, may soon begin.

Excuse me this excitement, dear friend; I will also try to forget that you spoke so. I proceed, therefore, to answer your letter, and

can dispense, I hope, without fear of angering you, with the giving of a special assurance that my official station will not influence my reply.

You estimate the value of Judaism by the principle of the purpose of human existence, and this, in your view, is found in happiness and perfection. I could ask: Is it so sure that happiness and perfection form the goal and object of man's being? I could ask upon what basis you found this opinion, or what could you answer to the careless pleasure-seeker or criminal, who thinks the excitement and sensual lust of the moment a greater happiness than all temporal or eternal blessings? Every one must be permitted to be his own judge of what constitutes happiness for him, for happiness decreed in accordance with any compulsory external standard, ceases to be happiness! And the perfecting of one's being, the mounting of the highest intellectual heights! By how few ever attained, by how few attainable!

Truth itself is conceived by a thousand

thinkers in a thousand different ways. To neglect its pursuit is, after all, only a sin against oneself, and, therefore, one can only be accountable to oneself. For to whom would I owe an accounting, if this principle only demands the promotion of the happiness and perfection of others as a means of attaining my own, and I relinquish this? How, I would ask you, is it with the multitude of unhappy and imperfect ones outside of Judaism? But I will omit all these questions. Let us put aside for a while the standard of measurement, and let us try to know that which we desire to measure—Judaism, in its history and teachings. Perhaps, on the way, we may learn to think differently concerning the destiny of mankind, and may obtain a different mode of discerning the purpose of the existence of the nations, and their duties. But we must become acquainted with it from the source which it itself points out to us; which it has rescued from the wreck of all its other fortunes as the only original document and source of instruction concerning its true essence—from its To-

rah. Its history we must learn from it, for Judaism is an historical phenomenon, and for its origin, its first entrance into history, and for a long subsequent time, the Torah is the only monument. And if, at the cradle of this people, we were to hear mystic voices, such as no other nation ever heard—voices announcing the purpose of this people's existence—for which it entered into history, should we not hearken to these voices, and try to comprehend them, that we might thus understand it and its history? It is the only source of its law, written and oral. Therefore, to the Torah! But, before we open it, let us consider how we shall read it. Not for the purpose of making philological and antiquarian investigations, nor to find support and corroboration for antediluvian or geological hypotheses, nor either in the expectation of unveiling supermundane mysteries, but as Jews must we read it—that is to say, looking upon it as a book given to us by God that we may learn from it to know ourselves—what we are, and what we should be in this our earthly existence. It must be to

us *Torah*—that is, instruction and guidance in this divine world; a generator of spiritual life within us. Our desire is to apprehend Judaism; therefore, we must take up our position in thought within Judaism, and must ask ourselves, “What will human beings be who recognize the contents of this book as a basis and rule of life given to them by God?” In the same way we must seek understanding of the *mitzvoth*, the commandments—that is to say, we must strive to know their extent and bearing from the written and oral law. All of this must take place from the standpoint of the object of all this procedure, the finding of the true law of life. Only when you have thus comprehended Judaism from itself, as it represents itself to be, and have then found it untenable and unworthy of acceptance, may you, if you wish, cast upon it the stone of obloquy. We must also read the *Torah in Hebrew*—that is to say, in accordance with the spirit of that language. It describes but little, but through the rich significance of its verbal roots it paints in the word a picture of the thing.

It only joins for us predicate to subject, and sentence to sentence; but it presupposes the listening soul so watchful and attentive that the deeper sense and profounder meaning, which lie not upon but below the surface, may be supplied by the independent action of the mind itself. It is, as it were, a semi-symbolic writing. With wakeful eye and ear, and with soul roused to activity, we must read; nothing is told us of such superficial import that we need only, as it were, accept it with half roused dreaminess; we must strive ourselves to create again the speaker's thoughts, to think them over, or the sense will escape us. We must follow also the same method in studying the *mitzvoth*, when they assign a purpose for any particular object, or ordain some symbolic practice. There we must strive to discover analytically the correction of the purpose with this particular object; here the natural method of practically expressing such an idea in consideration of its reason and connection. I only point out to you the path which I have followed. To you I shall

give only direct results, and that only, for the present, in general outlines; later, if you wish, you shall learn the details, and also the reasons for the methods of investigation.

Now, let us read. May you forget all the annoyance which the reading of these writings caused you in your youth; forget all the prejudices which you may have imbibed from different sources against these writings. Let us read as though we had never read them; as though we had never heard of them. Let us arouse in our soul the life questions, "What is the world in me, and around me, to me? What am I; what should I be to it? What am I; what should I be as man-Israel?"

With such interrogative spirit let us read, and receive the answer as Jews, from the mouth of the being who alone can give the explanation—from Deity. Farewell.

THIRD LETTER.

I have left you time till this letter, so that the life-questions which I touched upon toward the end of the previous letter might grow within you, and that you might perhaps have already taken into your hand in the proper frame of mind the book of life. We will now open it together. You will agree, my Benjamin, that what we wish is to become acquainted with Israel, to learn the import and significance of this name, which we bear by reason of birth, what we are and should be as bearers thereof. But Israel is an historical phenomenon among the other manifestations of the world's records, and therefore the next question is, what is the meaning of history? History, however differently we may conceive it, is without doubt the way to fulfill the destiny of man in universal humanity, therefore the next question is, what is man, what should he be? But man is not isolated, he is a creature amidst the other creatures, affected

by and affecting them; therefore we must next ask, what is the world? Israel, history, mankind, the world—they all can only be comprehended through God, the creator, as a work of art is only then perfectly understood, when we have an insight into the plans of the master, and to our eye God reveals himself only in His works. Thus the Torah—the Divine Book of the Law—leads through the concept of Israel and Israel's duties, to the knowledge of God, the world, the missions of mankind, and history. Let us follow the law upon this path.

The Torah summons us to view heaven and earth and speaks "from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, everything which thou seest existing, when it came into existence, **בראשית** **ברא אלהים** in its beginning God was active as its creator. Seest thou the heaven in its eternally silent, unchanging course, bearer of light and heat and all the motive forces of our earth, supporter of the earth-world, seest thou it with its millions of starry worlds, or resplendent with the refulgence of the magnif-

icently radiant sun-ball, or the earth, the swift runner,¹ with its eternal circles of originating and passing away, of blooming and withering, of life and death, eternally struggling from ceasing, fading, and death, to ever new existence, bloom, and life; dost thou see it with its millions of productions, stones, plants, animals, all of which it produces, nourishes, and again takes back into its bosom; dost thou see the light, the messenger of heaven to earth, which coaxes all to life and leads from life, through which thou seest everything which is, and everything arrays itself for thee in resplendent colors; dost thou see the firmament spread out around the earth, which receives the ray of light, and alters it to suit the necessity of the earth, in which the clouds move and water the parched earth, the thirsty grasses, and beasts, and men? Seest thou the universal ocean, with all-encompassing arm of flood embracing the earth, or the springs which burst forth from the fissures of the rocks and flow on as rivulets, brooks,

¹ A play in the term ארץ from רץ to run.

and mighty rivers? Dost thou rejoice in the firm surface of the earth upon which thou walkest safe and secure together with thy dear ones; hast thou pleasure in its meadowy expanse or its leafy trees, or in all the living beings which stir so animatedly in the waters and in the air, or dwell with thee on earth? Dost thou see sun, moon, and stars, which from their celestial positions above thee regulate the times of day and month and the seasons of the year, and determine the recurring periods of waking and sleep, of rise and fall, of bloom and decay on earth?

“ One God exists, one omnipotent Creator,” proclaims the Torah; “ through His word all which is was created.” Heaven and earth are His work; His are light and air, sea and dry land; His, plants and fishes, birds, insects, and all beasts; His, creation sun, moon, and stars. He spake וַיֵּאמֶר and it was. Behold now separately each created thing, from the blade of grass to the vast sun-ball, each with its special purpose and each specially adapted in its form and matter for that purpose; the same

Almighty wisdom formed and designated each for its special purpose. This Divine wisdom proclaimed to the light, "serve the day;" to the darkness, "serve the night;" to the firmament, "be the heaven over the earth;" to the gathering of waters, "be thou the ocean;" to the dry substance, "become earth, scene of life and development;" to the planets, "be ye rulers of the seasons." It determined the purpose, and according to the purpose, it ordained for its object matter, form, force, and dimensions. It spake, **וַיְהִי כֵן** and it was as it is. Infinitesimally small or infinitely great, all was created by the word of God, determined by His will, formed by His finger. All the forces which thou seest working in everything, and all the laws, according to which they work and which thou noticest and admirest; from the force and the law, in obedience to which a stone falls or a seed of corn grows into a plant; to the force and the law in accordance with which the planets move in their orbits or thy intellect expands; to God, the Universal Force,

they all belong; His word prevails in every law.

Now, notice again this great throng of beings, tho separated and distinguished by peculiar construction and different purposes, yet united in one great harmonious system, each working in its own place, its own time, and according to its own measure of force, none interfering with the other, each bearing the All and born by the All. Who is it that has harmonized all these opposites and united the countless into the All? **ויברל אלהים בין האור ובין החשך**. It is the same All-One who has established harmony between light and darkness, between life and death. As His love supplies matter and force to work, so also does the finger of His justice point limitation, goal, and measure. "Harmonizer of Contrasts is His name." And everything which He created, formed, and arranged—**ויברך אלהים**—He also blessed with the blessing of permanence and development. Not only all *was* through Him, all *is* through Him. His blessing is every bloom and blossom; His blessing every germ and every

fruit; His blessing the mother's offspring; His blessing the babe pressed to the loving breast. And He—who created, formed, blessed, and ordered—**שׁוֹפֵר**—invisible as the soul in thy body—He withdrew from gaze and concealed, like the soul, in His creation He continues to work, preserve and develop, invisible. His work thou seest, His formations thou admirest, His laws thou searchest out, His blessings thou enjoyest, but Him, the Creator, Shaper, Orderer, Benefactor of the world, Him thy mortal eye shall ne'er behold. Therefore, when thou seest and wonderest, studiest, and enjoyest, bend the knee and adore Him, the Only One, who created and formed, ordered and blessed, and worship Him as power, wisdom, justice, and love universal and eternal.

“ Attribute to God all the offspring of forces,
 Attribute to God all glory and power!
 Attribute to God the revelation of His name,
 Bow down to Him in raiment of the sanctuary!

The voice of God is upon the waters,

The Almighty One of creation thunders,
 God is upon the mighty floods.
 The voice of God is in every force,
 The voice of God is in all beauty.
 The voice of God breaketh the cedars,
 God shattereth the forests of Lebanon,
 He causeth them to skip like the foal,
 Lebanon and Siryon as the young Re'ëm.
 The voice of God splitteth the flaming fire,
 The voice of God terrifieth the wilderness,
 God affrighteth the wilderness of Kadesh!
 The voice of God maketh the gazelles give
 birth,
 And strippeth bare the forests.
 And in the temple of His worship
 His All proclaims 'Revelation.' (Psalm
 xxix.)"

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 "Even for this doth my heart tremble and stir
 from its place,
 Hear ye, hear!—the threatening of His voice
 and the word—
 How it leaps from His mouth!
 Under the whole heaven we see Him,

His light on the pinions of the earth.

After Him rolls the thunder—

He thunders in the voice of His majesty—

But He followeth not the track—e'en though
His voice is heard.

Thus doth Omnipotence thunder—miracles in
His voice,

He doeth great things, though we notice not,
Speaketh to the snow, "be upon the earth!"

"And thou rain, be messenger of heaven!"

Verily the rain is the embassy of His power.

Upon the hand of every man He imprinteth
His seal,

Remembereth every member of His creation,
Gathereth the wild beasts in their lairs,
That they rest in their hiding-places.

Storms come from hidden recesses,
In its season icy coldness,

From the breath of God—He causeth frost,
And the broad watery expanse becometh firm.

When, also, bright rays dispel the mists

He is it, who scattereth the clouds by His
light.

He! Cause of all causes! In wisdom creative

He changeth them that they fit their purpose.

All is as He biddeth it be for His world of men, for the earth,
For instruction, for earth-perfection, for love.
We find Him.' (Job xxxvii.)

Therefore, one creator is! All else, everything which thou knowest, is the creation, the revelation of this Only One! Everything is from Him, and subject to Him, through Him created, existing, active! And this world—what may it be? We tread upon holy soil, my Benjamin; we live in a divine world, God's creature and servant is every being around us! Every force is God's messenger; every portion of matter given it by God to be influenced, modified, and worked upon in accordance with God's omnipotent law. Everything serves God, each in its place, in its time, with the quantity of forces and means given it, fulfilling His word, contributing its share to the work of the universe, which He joins together to the whole perfect edifice—everything serves God.

“ He, who clotheth Himself with light
As with a garment;
Who spreadeth out the heavens as a carpet,
Who erecteth over the waters His arches,
Layeth the clouds at His feet,
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind,
He maketh the storms His messengers,
The flaming fire His servants.” (Psalm civ.)

Servants are they all, the storm wind, the lightning, the rain, and the snow; a servant is the worm which crawls at thy feet, the blade of grass which nods to thee on the way, the thunder which rolls majestic above thee, and the cool breeze which fans refreshment to thy fevered cheek—all serve the Lord.

“ For, as the rain and the snow descend from
Heaven

And return not thither until they have moist-
ened the earth,

And caused it to bear and yield fruit

Until it have given seed to the sower

And bread to the eater;

Thus also is My word which cometh forth
from My mouth,

It shall not return unto Me empty:
But it shall do that which I desire
And accomplish that for which I sent it forth."

(Isaiah lv : 10, 11.)

All things are servants about the throne of God! "For," say the sages, "not with one creative word did the Almighty summon all things, the universe and the individual, into being, so that all should depend immediately upon His behest for its existence and activity, and that nothing should bear and uphold any other thing, but that all should be directly born and upheld by God alone. On the contrary, in a series of ten developments God called His world into existence, created an abundance of forces, and caused them to pervade each other, and influence each other, in accordance with His will—uniting and separating them in such a manner, that each should assist in maintaining the other; that none should contain alone the conditions of its existence and activity in itself, but should receive from fellow beings, and impart to fellow beings, the potencies

of life and work." ¹ He, in His infinite wisdom, ordained this mutual interdependence in order that each individual being might contribute, with its measure of force, whether much or little, to the preservation of the All, so that whatsoever being should destroy, a fellow creature should thereby deprive itself of a condition of its own life. Thus water, having penetrated the earth, is collected in cloud, and sea; light, having pierced the earthy crust and brought forth plants, children of light and heat, is concentrated again into sun, moon, and stars; the germ, offspring of earth, is taken from the earth and given to the crown of ripened fruit, which henceforth the earth must receive that it give—thus one glorious chain of love, of giving and receiving, unites all creatures; none is by or for itself, but all things exist in continual reciprocal activity—the one for the All; the All for the One. None has power, or means, for itself; it receives in order to give; gives in order to receive, and finds therein the accomplishment

¹ "Ethics of the Fathers," chapter V, v. 1.

of the purpose of its existence. “ה,”
“Love,” say the sages, “love which bears
and is born is the type of creation.” “Love,”
is the message which all things proclaim to
thee.

FOURTH LETTER.

Man¹—what is he in this God-filled world? What is his place in this throng of creatures of God, this choir of servants of the Lord? Though the Torah were silent, would not the contemplation of creation, would not your own breast tell you? Man, is he not also a creature of God? Should he not also be a servant of God? Every fiber of your body is a creation from the hand of God, formed by Him, arranged by Him, endowed by Him with power. Your spirit, that world of powers, is the creation of God from beginning to end. The divine spark, your personality, which, invisible as Deity, weaves and works in this microcosm, and under whose control stand intellect and body and the power to use the entire realm of nature for its purpose, this mysterious spiritual force in you is itself emanation of Deity. Learn to deem yourself holy as creature of God and, while contemplating heaven and earth:

¹ Genesis i: 27 and ̅.

and the great chorus of servants of the Lord, consecrate yourself to your mission, and proclaim yourself with mingled solemnity and joy, "servant of God!" Since all things, the smallest and the greatest, are God's chosen messengers, to work, each in its place, and with its measure of power, according to the law of the Most High, taking only that it may give again, should man alone be excluded from this circle of blessed activity? Can he be born only to take?—to revel in lavish plenty or to starve in misery, but not to work?—not to fill any place, nor fulfill any purpose, but to let all end in himself? The world and all which is therein serves God; is it conceivable that man alone should only serve himself? No! Your consciousness pronounces you as does the Torah, **צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים** "an image of God." That is what man should be. Only when working out some end canst thou know God in love and righteousness; to work out ends of righteousness and love art thou called; not merely to enjoy or suffer. All which thou possessest, spirit, body, human beings, wealth,

every ability and every power, they are means of activity; לענרה ולשמרה to promote and preserve the world were they given—love and righteousness. Not thine is the earth, but thou belongest to the earth, to respect it as Divine soil and to deem every one of its creatures a creature of God, thy fellow-being; to respect and love it as such, and as such to endeavor to bring it nearer to its goal, according to the will of God. For this reason every being impresses upon thy spirit an image of itself; for this reason thy heart-strings pulsate sympathetically with every cry of distress heard anywhere in creation, or with every tone of joy which issues anywhere from a gladsome being; therefore thou rejoicest when the flower blooms and sorrowest when it fades. *The law to which all powers submit unconsciously and involuntarily, to it shalt thou also subordinate thyself, but consciously and of thy own free will.* “*Knowledge and freedom,*” these words indicate at once the sublime mission and the lofty privilege of man. All forces stand as servitors around the throne of God, their capacity is hid-

den from themselves and covered are their countenances, so that they can not see the reason of their mission, but they feel within them winged power to act, and act in accordance with their purpose. Thou, O man, thy countenance is half uncovered, thy capacity is half revealed, thou canst comprehend thyself as creature of God—canst at least faintly appreciate the notion of the mission which He breathed into thy ear; canst thou see thyself encompassed round about by God's active servants, canst thou feel in thyself power to act and wilt thou not joyously join in the cry of the great chorus of servants, **נעשה ונשמע** "we will do and therefore hearken? We will obey, and fulfilling strive to comprehend the import of the command!" Consciously and freely! Therefore thou shalt be first and highest servitor in the company of servants!

Not by that which we gain, my dear Benjamin, can our vocation be determined, not according to the extent of external or internal possessions which we gather in external or internal storehouses, should we estimate the

value of our lives; what we accomplish, what results proceed from us, these should fix our vocation, and in proportion as we use our external and internal possessions to fulfill the will of God and utilize every capacity, small or great, for a truly human, God-serving deed, will be the measure of our value. The attainment of internal or external possessions has only a value as the means of securing ability for such activity. From the slightest mental power and the nerve ganglia which minister to it, to the executive force of your hand with which you alter creation, and to which the entire realm of nature is subject, and every being which ever came within your reach—all of these are means lent to you—which one day will appear as witnesses for or against you, before the throne of God, and will testify whether you neglected or used them well, whether you wrought with them blessing or curse. There exists, therefore, an external measure for the deeds of men, correspondence to the will of God—and an internal measure for the greatness of men—

very
imp

not the extent of powers conferred, not the amount of results achieved, but the fulfillment of the Divine will in proportion to the power possessed. Life, therefore, may be an utter failure in spite of the purest sentiments, if the deeds done be not right; or may, on the other hand, be most sublime despite infinitesimal results, if the means did not suffice for more. Happiness and perfection are, therefore, nothing but the greatest plenitude of external and internal possessions which, only when employed in accordance with the will of God, constitute the greatness of man. The angel whose province it is to supervise the coming into existence of man, says one of the sages, takes the germ which is to be a human being, brings it before the Holy One, blessed be He, and asks, "This germ, what shall become of it in life? Shall he that proceeds from it be strong or weak, wise or simple, rich or poor?"¹ He does not ask whether he will be good or bad, pious or sinful, for all things depend upon the decree of God, except virtue and the

¹ Treatise Niddah, page 16, B.

fear of the Lord, the pious reverence of heaven, these the Almighty leaves to the free will of men. Let us not, therefore, judge man according to that which is hardly half in his hands, but rather according to that which God put entirely into his control, and which, therefore, can alone constitute his greatness. The mission of mankind, thus comprehended is attainable by all men, in every time, with any equipment of powers and means, in every condition. Whoever in his time, with his equipment of powers and means, in his condition, fulfills the will of God toward the creatures who enter into his circle, who injures none and assists every one according to his power, to reach the goal marked out for it by God—he is a man! He practises righteousness and love in his existence here below. His whole life, his whole being, his thoughts and feelings, his speech and action, even his business transactions and enjoyments—all of these are service of God. Such a life is exalted above all mutation.

Whether enjoyment or privation, whether

abundance or need be one's lot, whether tears of resigned sorrow or joy exultant be shed—the truly human personality, unchangeable almost as Deity, sees in every gain or loss only another summons to solve afresh the same problem. Thus man in his earthly frame belongs to earth, and his terrestrial existence is full of significance. As no passing breath, and no ephemeral grass-blade or butterfly exists for nought, but furnishes its contribution, slight though it be, which God's wisdom uses for the upbuilding of the All; thus also no pleasure, no thought, no deed, trifling though it be, is empty and purposeless; those which are right are finished work delivered into the hand of God that He may employ them for the completion of His universe-plan. Fulfillment of the Divine will with our property and our pleasures, with our thoughts, words, and deeds, that should be the contents of our lives. And we should strive to ascertain this will. For that is the special and peculiar greatness of man, that whereas the voice of God speaks *in or through* all other creatures, to him it

speaks directly that he accept voluntarily its precepts as propelling force of his life-activity. Go to, my Benjamin, and examine yourself; examine yourself in comparison with a grass-blade or a rolling thunder-peal, and if you do not, despite all your wealth of property and enjoyment of inner and outer possessions, blush with shame and veil your face in the presence of the angelic grandeur of such creatures, because of your selfish pettiness; and if you do not then rouse yourself with all your strength, with every spark of your being, to acquire for yourself such angelic power, then go and lament the degradation which the age has brought upon you.

“ Bless, O my soul, the Lord,
 And all my inner parts recognize His holiness!
 Bless, O my soul, the Lord,
 And forget not all which He lets ripen for
 thee.¹

That He forgiveth all thy perversities,
 That He healeth all thy ailings,
 That He redeemeth from the grave thy life,

¹ גמל = to ripen.

That He crowneth thee with loving kindness
and mercy,
That He satisfieth thee with good things, which
adorn thee,
That thou mayest renew as the eagle thy
youth.

.
Sunken man—as grass are his days,
As the flower of the field he bloometh;
The wind bloweth over him, he is no more,
No more doth his place know him.
But the loving kindness of the Lord is from
eternity to eternity
Unto those who revere Him, and His mercy
endureth unto the children's children,
Of those who regard His covenant,
And remember His commandments, to do
them.
For He—who hath founded His throne in
Heaven,
Ruleth in majesty throughout the All.
Bless Him, therefore, ye His messengers!
Ye who, girded with strength, fulfill His word
Obeying the voice of His word;

Bless Him, all ye His hosts!
His servants, fulfillers of His will!
Bless Him, all ye His creatures, in every place
of His kingdom,
Bless also thou, O my soul, the Lord.”¹

¹ Psalm ciii.

FIFTH LETTER.

I had formed no different conception of you, dear Benjamin, than your recent letter gave me. What youth, still capable of enthusiasm for the noble, could contemplate Heaven and earth and their hosts, or could reflect upon their work, or the work of any single creature, without forming a notion of his task in life consonant with his dignity as a human being, or could do otherwise than to cast away with shame and contempt the idols of silver and gold, and particularly the universal idol, "Pleasure?" The object of such insight into the true mission of humanity, and of the consequent renunciation of sensual enjoyments, is not, however, indolent withdrawal from the active tasks of life, but, on the contrary, manly vigor, and the pursuit of the highest aims, using human possessions and capacities, not, however, as ends, but as means. The richer Heaven makes you in internal and external possessions, the more exhaustive fulfillment of His will He demands of you; the wider-extended and all-

embracing does your duty become. You are right also in saying that the mere contemplation of the abilities of man is sufficient to prove it his duty to accomplish some end. Consider, furthermore, how his whole physical and intellectual constitution clearly indicates the tasks for the carrying out of which he is adapted; his head is borne proudly erect that his eyes may examine and inspect the world in which he moves; his hands are equipped with mobile fingers admirably fitted for the work of the artist and sculptor; his intellectual power is sufficient to know the things which shall serve him as means to his ends, but beyond that the path of knowledge is difficult and dangerous, and pursued but by few; the development of his mental force is itself dependent upon external means, upon words and communications; but, in contradistinction thereto, the heart, the source of all action, is capable of embracing all beings in regard and love, is capable of the greatest increase, of unlimited progress.

You are right also in asserting that, thus

understood, revelation of the Divine will is absolutely required, whether external or internal, or both. I am not at all surprised that you can not follow me in my Biblical interpretations. For the present, therefore, accept my outlined statements as though they were mere personal hypotheses of my own; investigate their intrinsic truth; familiarize yourself with the thought: "How would it be if this were really the contents of the Torah?" and leave it to me to demonstrate later that such is really the case. Let us now continue. We have now, guided by the Torah, ascertained the position of man in creation. Neither as god nor as slave shall he stand in the midst of the creatures of the earth-world; but as brother, as co-working brother, occupying, however, the rank of first-born among his brother beings, because of the peculiar nature and extent of his service; he is to be administrator of the whole Divine estate, the earth-world; to provide and care for all therein according to the will of God. From God alone, source of all *might*, does man derive the *right* to take for his own use the earth-

world, but with this right comes also the *duty*, only to appropriate the *permitted*, and to use that in strict accordance with the will of the Giver. "Good" should be for him only that which agrees with this Divine will and with the disposition fixed for objects by Divine wisdom; "evil" only that which stands in opposition to these principles. Not that should be deemed good or evil which is agreeable or disagreeable to him, man; which is pleasant or unpleasant to his sensual nature, or that which harmonizes with, or is opposed to, principles, arbitrarily selected by himself without reference to the will of Deity.

For neither the gratification of impulses and lusts, nor ambitious self-aggrandizement and caprice constitute the task of man, but he shall elevate all his power, desires, and physical qualities to be means of carrying out the will of God, of bringing him nearer to his sought-for goal. Man's freedom, of course, postulates the possibility of mistakes and error.

Man has the duty to submit willingly to the

law which all others are compelled to obey, and this naturally implies that he has also the power to disobey it. Through his animal portion, his body with its desires, he is threatened with sensual lust; that, dazzled by the charm of the pleasant sensations which the Divine love has caused to accompany every act of satisfying his needs, he may no longer regard pleasure as the means but as the end itself. Through the power of his intellect he is threatened with pride, that because of his ability to control material things, and to alter them in accordance with a certain perceived purpose, he may look upon himself as master, forgetting thereby God the Lord, forgetting, also, that all things are Divine possessions lent him for specific purposes, and may usurp to himself the right to subject all to the domination of his own will. Deepest degradation may result when his entire effort is devoted to the gratification of animal lust, and the mind of the ruler lowers itself to be the slave of the beast, employing all its skill only to secure the gratification of bestial de-

sires. Then is man the most dangerous beast of prey, for he is armed with intellect, and the whole world is not safe against the caprices of his passions.

Scripture omits to narrate any revelation of God's will to mankind in general, as it reserves this for the later history of a special nation, to which all which precedes but serves as a guide and an introduction.¹

One educational commandment appears, and then man and his education by God are shown. A world is laid at man's feet for him to possess and enjoy, but one enjoyment is interdicted, without revealed reason, solely as a decree of the Most High. For man should subordinate himself to his Creator, and for him highest wisdom consists in obeying the will of God as the will of *his* God. But to be willing to fulfill the behests of that will only when or because they appear also to us right and wise and good, could that be called obedience to God? Would not that rather be

¹ Except one revelation given after the flood to the sons of Noah.

obedience to oneself? Lust and desire for pleasure tempt us with seductive words: "How attractive it is, how agreeable, how sweet!" Pride of intellect adds also its contribution to the words dictated by desire: "Have not we also mind, intelligence, and understanding? Can we not, like gods, know of ourselves what is good and what bad? Why, nothing is easier! How sweet it is, is it conceivable that it should not be good? Besides, unto us belongs the earth and the fulness thereof!" Thus only the sweet is regarded by man as good, as bad only the bitter. The history of all sin is the same. God reveals Himself as Judge, but also as Father and Teacher. Verily, judgment is His prerogative, for does not the earth, and the fulness thereof, belong to Him? Have we not received from, yea, from Him alone, power and right to acquire and to enjoy? If we misuse this power but once, stretch out our hand but a single time toward that which is forbidden, have we not thereby forfeited all claim to the right of existence on earth? "On the day

when thou disregardest the prohibition, thou shalt surely forfeit thy life," is the warning of the just Judge. Nevertheless, God does not exact the incurred penalty of sin from His fallen child, but strives, with paternal love and forbearance, to guide him to the right.

The path to pleasure is made difficult to discourage the development of the animal side of his being and to render less arrogant his pride; that the real man in him be led upwards to God, through realization of the limitations of his power, and that something else must be his task and his greatness than that which can be thus easily conferred upon him, or taken from him. Thus also every one of us is taught even to-day. In our experience God's paternal teaching speaks to us. Into the realm of the temporal each one enters pure and capable of attaining to the highest stage of human greatness. That you are born in this particular hour, in this certain place, amid such and such surroundings, with your own special parents, brothers, and sisters, and with the definite measure of intellectual and physical powers

and material possession which you hold; that you find certain teachers, acquaintances, and friends, that is the Eden into which God puts you. But it is not given that you may in pride forget Him and cling to temporal possessions as tho they were the eternal good. Do that and sorrows צרות will enter into your life-tabernacle, which will throw you back into your own insignificance, and will forcibly inform you that all, parents and family, friends and acquaintances, wealth and possessions, body and soul, are but gifts—gifts of God, and that you in yourself are not all. You are here to use every possession as an instrument put into your hands to help you fulfill the will of God.

But freedom delays the success of education. Through labor pride is nurtured, and man calls "his" the soil which he has moistened with his sweat (קִיץ); the necessity of providing for the satisfying of physical cravings, which demand an increasingly large portion of the good things of the world, exalts again the animal in man; he sees in himself only an ani-

mal, and deems his mind only a means of procuring the gratification of physical desires; the human in man sinks (נפילים.) That which could lift him up, the acknowledgment of God as the only Ruler and Father, and, therefore, of everything else as creature and servant, and consequently of himself, as well as servant and child, this acknowledgment has grown dim. For as soon as man ceases to look upon himself as the empowered guardian and administrator of the earth-world, as soon as he endeavors to carry out, not the will of God, but his own will, and ceases to be servant of God; he sees no longer in the strength-endowed beings around him the servitors of Deity, but independent forces which seek possession, lust, and power, he has no eye any more for the law of the All-One whom they all serve, and the world divides itself for him into as many gods as he sees forces in operation. For him the sun does not shine, nor the thunder roll, the lightning flash, or the earth deck itself in green; the storm roar, or the living beings reproduce their kind, because they

must, but because they wish, for the consciousness of the law is gone from his own breast. He, therefore, desiring only possession and lust, becomes a slave of the beings from which he hopes to obtain that which he desires, he bends the knee to the creatures (אנני) until finally, recognizing the omnipotence of his passions, he deifies them; and, furthermore, since all beings seem to him not servants of a great world-plan, but independent forces, seeking power and lust, he soon ceases to look upon the pursuit of power and lust as bestial and unworthy of man, but deems it divine, man's most worthy goal. The acknowledgment of the All-One would lift him up, but polytheism becomes the grave of his humanity. The generation seemed incorrigible, and—destruction was its lot. Only one man, the father of a family, who walked before the All-One, sought righteousness, and elevated himself by governing sternly the animal in his nature, offered consolation in this destruction of the generation. He was saved, with his family, to found a new edifice of mankind נח.

SIXTH LETTER.

The new generation, which should have learned to recognize God in holy awe as Judge, Master, and Savior, forgot soon this lesson. In its pride it desires to establish itself as master upon the earth, just presented to it as a Divine gift. Because of the power with which it rules over nature, it believes that it can dispense with God in establishing and maintaining its new life. Thus begins history. God no longer wills the destruction of humanity, but its education. By experience He desires to train mankind to the knowledge of themselves and of Him. Humanity must not sink again to the deep degradation of the perished generation. Men must be dispersed, lest the human species slowly spreading over the earth form but a single family, and the corruption of one part be quickly communicated to the whole. They must be dispersed in order that mankind may

rejuvenate itself from its own midst, and when one race has gone through all the stages of the sinful illusions which weaken and corrupt mankind, and is enervated, exhausted, and unfit for the Divine purpose, it shall yield its place to a stronger and hardier race, which shall begin a fresher, purer life.

Mankind must be scattered, must distribute itself among all the different regions of earth in order that the most divergent and contrary faculties of the human mind may find in nature the needed opportunities of development, in order that experience become full and complete. In order to render this plan of education possible, the earth was reconstituted after it had been laid waste and desolated; diversified as regards its soil and climate, and divided into various continents and lands, by seas and rivers, mountains and deserts. This diversity of the earth was, by the Divine plan, intended to profoundly influence man, vainly fancying himself master of the earth, and to affect, even to their innermost characteristics, his body, his opinions, his habits, his passions, and his

language. Thus should a broad and variegated experience become possible. This experience should make him worthy of God and of himself; should teach him to recognize the supreme dominion of God over nature and human life; should cause him to realize that the task of man is higher than merely to possess and to enjoy.

From this time on nation after nation enters into the arena of history; each presents some new power, some new capacity of the human intellect, and uses these faculties, in battle with nature and with each other, for the purpose of obtaining wealth and enjoyment. Gladly would the nations retain for all eternity what they have thus gained, but a higher hand, upon which the conditions of their success are dependent, dashes what they thought indestructible, by a slight breath of Divine potency, into ruins, and before the eyes of wondering humanity, it brings to pass from unnoticed trifles the most tremendous results. When a people has succeeded in climbing to the summit of material greatness, in its very

greatness, nay, even because of it, it crashes down into destruction, and forsakes the sphere of its activity for similar attempts on the part of the succeeding generations. The time must and will come when the inevitable results of all these efforts will be clearly manifest to the minds of the latest of men. Then, when these attempts are finally completed, when every nation in its rise and fall will have inscribed in the book of history, as its judgment of human greatness, “הַבֵּל” “vanity and folly;” when ruined are all efforts to attain lasting felicity by human possessions and greatness, and crushed all the edifices of violence and the schemes of materialistic cunning; when only that permanently endures which men have based upon God-revering righteousness and love; after mankind, which had, in strange delusion, placed all creatures, and even man himself, upon the throne of the Most High, has learned, in the destruction of human ambitions, the nothingness of these puny rivals of Deity, and lifts its eye, unobscured by superstitious veil, to the All-One.

and comprehends again true human greatness, to which wealth and lust are but means; when this knowledge, this sentiment, pervades reunited humanity; when men are ripe for the question, not "what should we do in order to be happy and blessed, but, when we are happy and blessed, when we bear the fulness of good in our hands, what shall we do with this blessing?" then

"At the end of days the mount of the Lord will be firmly established upon the peaks of the mountains,¹

And born by the hills—and to it all peoples shall stream.

And there shall go great nations and speak:

"Come, let us go to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob,

And He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in His paths;

For from Zion shall come forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

He will judge between the nations, and teach mighty peoples,

¹ Isaiah, Chapter ii.

That they shall beat their swords to scythes
and their spears to pruning-hooks,
That no people shall lift up the sword against
another,

And they shall no more learn war.

O house of Jacob! Go before us, that we
may also walk in the light of the Lord!

For thou hast forsaken thy people, O house of
Jacob!

So that they filled themselves from the East,
Became time-servers, like the Philistines,
And satisfied themselves with things born of
strangers.

And when His earth became full of silver and
gold, and there was no end of treasures,

And when His earth became full of horses,
and there was no end of chariots;

Then also did His earth fill with gods.

They bowed themselves to the work of His
hands, to that which His fingers had formed.

Mankind sank then, humanity fell, and Thou
didst not lift them up!

“Enter into the rock, hide yourselves in the
dust,

Before the terror of the Lord, before the greatness of His majesty.”

Thus will be lowered the eye of the haughtiness of man,

Thus will be humiliated the pride of men,
And God alone will be great on that day.

For there is a day unto the Lord of Hosts
Concerning every proud and high thing, yea,
concerning all the haughty

That they sink!

Concerning all the cedars of Lebanon, though
high and exalted,

And concerning all the oaks of Bashan;

Concerning all the high mountains and all the
elevated hills,

Concerning every high tower and every strong
wall,

Concerning all the ships of Tarshish and all
the edifices of lust;

That the pride of man may be bowed down
and broken human haughtiness,

And that God alone may be great on that
day;

The gods He will cause to disappear in smoke,

And people shall hasten into the clefts of
 rocks and the cavities of earth
 From before the terror of the Lord and the
 glory of His majesty,
 When He arises to rule the earth.
 On that day man shall cast away the idols of
 his silver
 And the idols of his gold,
 Which have caused him to bow to the mole
 and the bat;
 And will hasten into the fissures of the rocks
 and hollows of stone
 From before the terror of the Lord and the
 greatness of His majesty
 When he arises to rule the earth."

.
 When you will have read through the pages
 of history, with the "voice which gathers all"
 you will exclaim—

"Vanity of vanities! All is vain!"

What is the end of man with all his toil under
 the sun?

Generations go, generations come, and the

¹ Ecclesiastes i : 2-15, and xii : 13.

earth-development marches ever to a hidden future;

Here rises fortune's sun, there it sinks, e'en while rising, and to its place of setting its course is turned;

Rises to midday strength—turns to midnight gloom—

Thus circles the day, and in its circling turns again to its beginning.

All nation-streams rush to the sea of death, but the sea is not filled; to the spot where the streams are born.

They return again to follow anew.

All words are powerless, man can not speak, The eyes can not see enough, the ear not fully hear;

What was is what shall be, what was produced is what shall be produced;

All new is nought under the sun.

If thou speakest, "behold, this is new!" verily, in the ages of the past, it came into being.

There is no remembrance of the former ones, Forsooth, of the latest there will be no remembrance.

Would I devote my heart to search
 Yea, in wisdom to study all that is done under
 the sun,
 Useless were the toil; God gave it to the chil-
 dren of man
 For matter of thought, that they might busy
 themselves with it.
 I see all that is done under the sun,
 And behold, all is vanity and useless wearying
 of the spirit!
 That which is perverse can not be straight-
 ened;
 The imperfections can not be counted.
 This is the conclusion of the matter,
 After all has been heard.
 God thou shalt revere, His mandate obey,
 For in this is the whole task of mankind."

.
 "O Lord, a dwelling art Thou. Thou abidest
 with us¹

Though generation follow after generation;
 Before the mountains were born, Thou brought-
 est forth the earth;

¹ Psalm xc: 1-7.

Even the inhabited world of men!

Yea, from hidden past to veiled future—omnipotent art Thou!

Degraded mankind thou lettest sink to destruction's verge,

Then speakest, "Return to human worth, O children of man,"

For a thousand years are in Thy sight

As yesterday when it hath passed away,

E'en as a watch in the night.

Thou causest them to flow away with the stream of life,

Sleep they become;

In the morning man is as the fresh grass,

In the morning he flourishes and blooms,

But at eventide he is withered and dry."

.....
 "O God! be gracious unto us, and bless us,¹

Let Thy guiding light shine e'er upon us!

That there be known on earth Thy way,

Amongst all nations Thy salvation.

That the nations acknowledge Thee, O God,

Even the nations altogether.

¹ Psalm lxxvii.

That the nations rejoice and be glad
When Thou judgest the people in righteous-
ness

And the nations Thou guidest on earth.
Selah!

May the nations acknowledge Thee, O God,
Even the nations all together,
When the earth shall have yielded its fruit,
God, even our God will bless us.
May God bless us and let fear Him
All the ends of the earth.”

• • • • •
“ Thus speaketh David, son of Jesse,¹
Thus speaketh the man, high exalted,
Anointed of the God of Jacob,
Sweet singer of Israel.
The spirit of God spoke in me,
His word was on my tongue,
There spoke to me the God of Israel,
To me spoke Israel’s rock.
Among mankind righteousness shall prevail,
The fear of God shall conquer.
When salvation’s morn shall shine,

¹ Samuel II, xxiii : 1-7.

Bright as the sun it shall flash.
That morn shall know no cloud,
Radiant with light, fertile with rain,
Grass shall spring from the earth.
Is not thus my house with God,
For a concealed covenant of eternity He estab-
lished unto me,
In all ordered and preserved.
All embracing is my salvation,
All embracing the goal,
Though it shine not yet forth.
But the deeds of violence,
Like scattered thorns are they all,
Removed by an unseen hand.
Would one assault them,
'Twould need sword and spear.
In fire unseen they shall be consumed,
Through invisible direction."

SEVENTH LETTER.

From the beginning of the passage of Isaiah you have comprehended the place which Israel should occupy in the series of development of the nations, and have not erred, dear Benjamin.

While mankind, educated by experience, was to learn to know God and itself from its manifold vicissitudes, the final goal of this experience was to be made surer and speedier of attainment by a special ordainment. Because men had eliminated God from life, nay, even from nature, and found the basis of life in possessions and its aim in enjoyment, deeming life the product of the multitude of human desires, just as they looked upon nature as the product of a multitude of gods, therefore, it became necessary that a people be introduced into the ranks of the nations which through its history and life should declare God the only creative cause of existence, fulfillment

of His will the only aim of life; and which should bear the revelation of His will, rejuvenated and renewed for its sake, unto all parts of the world as the motive and incentive of its coherence. This mission required for its carrying out a nation, poor in everything upon which the rest of mankind reared the edifice of its greatness and its power; externally subordinate to the nations armed with proud reliance on self, but fortified by direct reliance on God; so that by suppression of every opposing force God might reveal Himself directly as the only Creator, Judge, and Master of nature and history.

Despite its political subordination, however, this people was to receive from the hands of its Creator all the means of individual human and national prosperity, in order that it might dedicate all its wealth of resources to the one purpose—fulfilment of the Divine will. That which universal mankind esteemed weal and woe should also depend on the fulfilment of this will, and thus even the external doings and sufferings of this people should be a means

of directly inculcating a correct understanding of God and human duty, which mankind would otherwise have learned indirectly by experience.

“One God, Creator, Lawgiver, Judge, Guide, Preserver, and Father of all beings; all beings His servants, His children, man also His child and servant, from His hand all, and this all to be used only for the fulfilment of His will, since this alone is sufficient for a proper attainment of the purposes of life, while all other human occupations and pursuits are but paths which lead to the goal of the fulfilment of the mission of humanity.”

The proclaiming of these great truths was to be the chief, if not the sole, life-task of this people.

It must needs be a people which acknowledges “ה” “The Ineffable Lord of Love,” as alone אלהים Omnipotent Master and Judge, that is, which recognizes the God, who calls and trains in love all mankind to His service, as the only Founder, Guide, and Lever of its thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds, which

knows that whatever it has is received from Him, and which, with all its power, lives for Him and Him alone.

A new stone was to be laid upon which could be built afresh the edifice of humanity, into which the knowledge of God and human duty might flee for refuge when rejected and disowned by others. It should be alike an example, a warning, a model, and an instruction.

Such a mission imposed upon it another duty, the duty of separation, of ethical and spiritual isolation. It could not join in the doings of the other peoples in order that it might not sink to their level and perish in the abyss of their worship of wealth and pleasure. It must remain alone and aloof, must do its work and live its life in separation, until, refined and purified by its teachings and its example, universal humanity might turn to God and acknowledge in Him the only Creator and Ruler. That attained, Israel's mission will have been accomplished.

“On that day the Lord shall be one and

His name one, for from Zion will go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

“The Lord from Sinai came, from Seir shone
He forth,¹

Flashed from Paran’s mount, with myriad
holiness came.

At His right hand—a fiery law for them.

Verily He loved the nations,

But His holy ones were implements in thy
hand.

When they shall follow in thy footsteps,

They, too, shall utter forth thy words;

The law, which Moses commanded unto us,

It is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob.”

¹ Deuteronomy, xxxiii : 2-4.

EIGHTH LETTER.

¹ In Abraham there was chosen as progenitor of this people a man who, in his individual life, already realized the ideal of the people that was to be. The All-One, whom he alone worshipped amidst the multitude of idolatrous seekers after wealth and lust, the All-One called and loving Him alone, Abraham cast from him his native land, his family, his parental dwelling, and all which man loves and cherishes, and followed Him who called him; he accepted the mission to become progenitor of a people from which "blessing should come to all the peoples of the earth which would keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and judgment," and followed Him; he carried out the ideal of this love to the All-One in his love to his children, to his fellow beings; he cared for them, saved them, instructed them, whenever and wherever he could, and prayed

¹ Genesis from chap. xii.

for them to the Judge of all. And He, for whom he left all, and whose call he had followed into a strange land, He protected him upon his wanderings, and blessed him, so that he needed to derive safety and blessing only from His hands, and used them only for the salvation of the world.

To this "אהבה," love, was joined "אמונה," faith and trust, firm as the immovable rocks, which beholds life sustained by the All-One, and, therefore, holds fast to His promises, however slightly the present may seem to justify their expectation, and "יראה," that true fear of God which is ready any moment to surrender uncomplainingly the dearest to the Most High, because it realizes that all man possesses is but the free-will gift of God. These sentiments of the soul, this conscientiously-scrupulous and pious view of life, they were transmitted as an inheritance to Isaac, his son, and to Jacob, his grandson, the former more prominently manifesting the qualities of the attribute of "יראה," the latter those of "אמונה."

“They wandered from people to people, from one kingdom to another nation. He permitted no man to oppress them, but punished on their behalf princes, saying, ‘Touch not my anointed ones; do no evil unto my prophets.’”¹

In the lives of these individuals God revealed Himself as the invisibly ruling Providence until they had grown to a family of seventy persons. In them was the kernel of the future nation. But the people which grew from this kernel was not spontaneously fitted for its sublime mission; it required to be trained, to be taught until it attained the capacity needed for its task. In contrast to other peoples it could find the proper preparation for its national duties only in the school of suffering. It needed to be deprived of all which constitutes ordinarily the glory of nations, even of that which makes the external splendor of individual men, it had to lose all but morality, religion, and hope, in order that it might receive all its life-treasures from Him alone.

Egypt, which at that time enjoyed the high-

¹ Psalm cv : 13-15.

est perfection of human culture, and which looked upon its soil and its river as its gods, Egypt became the cradle of misery in which Israel passed its infancy of preparation for its sublime mission. As reward for a benefit originating from one of them (Joseph), they were invited to make their home in the Nile-land, they were first guests, then citizens; but Egypt, revering only material possessions, knew not the All-One, saw not in all human beings His children, and in the arrogance of its power it treacherously disregarded the rights of hospitality and humanity, and made Israel its slaves. Israel sank to the lowest plane of human existence, though its numbers had increased to the proportions of a nation, and Mizraim, once a host, became unto it a tyrant, proud in its might, mocking and scorning the feeble and oppressed. Then appeared the All-One.

Upon a light cloud He appeared,
And there trembled Egypt's gods.

— He revealed Himself as only Creator, as Lord of nature, though human hands had

sought to master it, as God of nations, as Vindicator of the oppressed, as Judge of the arrogant. Mizraim's greatness sank before the majesty of the people which found its all in God. This God spoke—and there sank the walls of the Egyptian prison, and freed from its chains the people marched forth. From the hands of God it received freedom and nationality, and as object of this all, the revelation of His will as guidance for human life, the Torah. In Mizraim's school, in the education of the wilderness, "אמונה," faith and trust was to become the basal element of its character; it was to acquire that firmness of devotion to the All-One which should strengthen and console it in the manifold trials that were to come.

—In the wilderness it received the Torah, and thus in the wilderness, without land or soil, it became a nation. It became a body, whose soul was the Torah, and, therefore, could be truthfully called "ממלכת כהנים," "a kingdom of priests," for as the priest in the midst of a single people was this nation to be in the

midst of universal mankind, preserving the law of God, and practicing and fulfilling its holy precepts. “גוי קדוש,” “Holy nation,” was also to be its appellation, for, through the fulfilment of the Divine law, it was to become holy, not participating in the worldly doings of other nations, but preaching the sacredness of humanity by the example of its life. The Torah, the fulfilment of the Divine will, was to be its soil and country, and aim; its national existence, therefore, was neither dependent upon, nor conditioned by transitory things, but eternal as the spirit, the soul and the word of the Eternal One.

It was to be a people in the midst of the peoples; as people it was to show the peoples that God is the Source, and the Giver, of all blessing; that to dedicate oneself to the fulfilment of His will means the attainment of all happiness that man can desire; that this sacred resolve is sufficient to give stability and security to human existence. It received, therefore, the blessings of a land and state-power, not, however, as end, but as means of carry-

ing out the Torah, its possession and retention dependent, therefore, upon fulfilment thereof as only condition. It was to be separate, even in happiness, from the nations in order that it might not learn of them to revere well-being and fortune as the goal of life, and, like them, sink into the worship of wealth and lust.

How glorious a sight, this people, if it succeed in attaining its ideal! One God, the All-One, one Lord and Father of them all; they all equal brothers, subject to the paternal government of the All-One; the fulfilment of His will in righteousness and love their only greatness, and in order to be able to successfully accomplish their task, the Divine blessing poured out unto them lavishly, without stint or limitation.

“ How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,¹

Thy tabernacles, O Israel!

As brooks they are stretched forth,

As gardens by the river,

As aloes, which the Lord hath planted,

¹ Numbers xxiv : 5-7.

As cedars by the water;
The water floweth from the vessels of God,
'Tis His seed by the rushing streams.
Therefore shall His king be exalted above
Agag,
His kingdom shall be uplifted.
He saw no wickedness in Jacob,
He beheld no violence in Israel;
The Lord, his God, is with him,
And trumpet blowing, homage to the King.
The God, who led him forth from Egypt,
Is strength to him as the buffalo's mighty
horns.
Therefore, no sorcery is in Jacob;
No wizard-art in Israel,
The time cometh when shall be sought
In Jacob and Israel what God hath wrought."

NINTH LETTER.

Only for a short time was Israel able to attain its ideal, the fulfilment of its mission in prosperity. Even the first leader of the nation, Moses, foretold that upon God's soil they would forget God; that, led astray by the example of the other nations, they would esteem only wealth and pleasure worthy of seeking, and would become oblivious to their mission. There came the time when, even in Israel, the prophet could lament—"As the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah." It became necessary to take away the abundance of earthly good, the wealth and the land, which had led it away from its mission; it was obliged to leave the happy soil which had seduced it from its allegiance to the Most High; nothing should be saved except the soul of its existence, the Torah; no other bond of unity should henceforth exist except "God and its mission," which are indestructible, because spiritual. Through the annihilation

of Israel's state-life its mission did not cease, for that had been intended only as a means to an end. On the contrary, this destruction itself was a part of its fate; so strangely commingled of divine and human elements, in exile and dispersion its mission was to be resumed in a different manner. No other sins had been committed in the Israel-state than appear in the life of other nations, but that which could be tolerated among others could not be excused in Israel; for its special office was to preserve itself pure from all sin and perversity, since "יהוה" was its God. Destruction and misfortune are therefore no less instructive for Israel than prosperity. The dispersion opened a new, great, and wide-extended field for the fulfilment of its mission. But before the great wandering through the ages and the nations began, God gathered them again upon their home-soil, as a father, who is forced to send his children forth into the world, gathers them together in his house before their departure, to extend to them at once his parental blessing and his fond fare-

well. There, in their national home, they bound closer to themselves the Torah-bond which henceforth was alone to join them together. On the very eve of the exile, a branch left the parent tree, which was obliged to surrender largely the characteristics of the parent stem, in order to bring to the world, which had relapsed into polytheism, violence, immorality, and inhumanity, the tidings of the existence of the All-One and of the brotherhood of man and his superiority to the beast, and to proclaim the deliverance of mankind from the bondage of wealth-and-lust worship. Assisted greatly by this offshoot in rendering intelligible to the world the objects and purposes of Israel's election, the nation was scattered into the four quarters of the earth, unto all peoples and all zones, in order that in the dispersion it might better fulfill its mission. "To the wilderness again," proclaimed the Prophet's voice.

"Into the wilderness again ; prepare there the path of the Lord."¹

¹ Isaiah, chap. x1 : 3-5.

Make smooth in evening gloom a way for our
God.

When every valley will be lifted ; when hill
and mount are lowered ;

When the rough ground is smoothed ; when
the ridges are made even,

Then will be revealed the glory of the Lord,
And all flesh shall see that the mouth of God
hath spoken."

Israel accomplished its task better in exile than in the full possession of good fortune. Indeed, improvement and correction were the chief purposes of the *Galuth*—exile. With its own eyes the nation saw the destruction of the power and the splendor which had dazzled it, and which it had begun to revere as its gods. Could it ever again revere wealth, power, and grandeur as the gods of life? Without power, without splendor, without brilliant show of human grandeur, it preserved its faithfulness toward the All-One and the spirit and the maintenance of its only rescued treasure, the Torah—preserved it alive amidst suffering and agony, enabled it to

endure all the blows of savage fanaticism unchained.

On every side states in all the glory of human power and pride disappeared from the face of the earth, while Israel, upheld only by its fidelity to God and His law, maintained successfully its existence. Could, then, Israel refuse to acknowledge this All-One as its God, or to accept His Torah as its only mission on earth?

And, in very truth, it proved that this training was not in vain. A thousand times delusions, armed with material power and passions aroused by these delusions, opened to Israel the path to the full enjoyment of earthly happiness, if it would, with but a single word, declare its rejection of the All-One—its disregard of His Torah; but, as often as temptation met it, it would cast away in scorn this easy key, preferring rather to extend the neck to the blow of the executioner. It sacrificed its own scanty measure of happiness, the most precious possession of earthly existence, wives, children, parents, brothers, and sisters,

life, property, and all the joys of life. With Israel's heart-blood is written on all the pages of history the doctrine that there is but one God, and that there are higher and better things for mankind than wealth and pleasure. Its entire Galuth history is one vast altar, upon which it sacrificed all that men desire and love for the sake of acknowledging God and His law. Among all nations and in every region such altars have smoked. Did they not teach, could they fail to teach, a most impressive lesson? Deeply upon the heart of Israel they impressed the conviction that a more than human power was sustaining them in their unparalleled tribulations. In this power they learned to worship the All-One; in faithful devotion to Him, they recognized their mission.

And now that these altars have ceased to smoke, and the scattered ones of Israel are tolerated, protected, even accepted as citizens, how beautiful, nay, how necessary were it that they should, in accordance with the permission of the nations, develop in peace and quietude

all the grandeur of the Israel life. How beautiful it would be if Israel, obeying the word of its prophet, should attach itself closely to every state which has accepted its children in citizenship, and should seek to promote the welfare and the peace thereof.

If in the midst of a world which reveres wealth and lust, it should live a tranquil life of righteousness and love; if, while everywhere the generation is rapidly sinking into sensuality and immorality, Israel's sons and daughters should bloom forth in the best adornment of youth, purity and innocence; if, though everywhere the habitations of men should cease to be the orchards in which are grown human fruit pleasing in the sight of God and man, every Israelitish house should, nevertheless, be a temple of true faith in God, of reverence and love for Him; if, though everywhere avarice, lust, and greed should become the motives of human actions, every Jew should still, in despite thereof, be a silent example and teacher of universal righteousness and universal love—if thus the

dispersed of Israel should show themselves everywhere on earth the glorious priests of God and pure humanity, O my Benjamin, if we were, if we would become, what we should be—if our lives were a perfect reflection of our law—what a mighty engine we would constitute for propelling mankind to the final goal of all human education! More quietly, but more forcefully and profoundly, would it effect mankind than even our tragical record of sorrows, powerfully though this latter teaches the intervention of providence in human affairs.

In the centuries of passion and scorn our mission was but imperfectly attainable, but the ages of mildness and justice, now begun, beckon us to that glorious goal; that every Jew and every Jewess should be in his or her own life a modest and unassuming priest or priestess of God and true humanity. When such an ideal and such a mission await us, can we still, my Benjamin, lament our fate?

“Be pure, O ye that bear the weapons of the Lord,¹

¹ Isaiah, chap. lii : 11 ; chap. lvi : 7.

For not in lightness should ye go forth,
Nor in carelessness should ye walk ;
For He that walketh before you is the Lord,
And He that guardeth you is the God of
Israel.

Behold, if my servant be but wise,
He shall be high and exalted and very great.
As many were amazed at thee,
Saying, " His appearance is corrupted from
manly semblance,
His likeness from the children of men."

So shall light come to many peoples,
And kings shall close their mouths,
For what was not told unto them they shall see,
And what they never heard they shall con-
template.

Wondering, they shall say, " Who would
believe our report ? "

" The arm of the Lord, upon whom is it re-
vealed ? "

He rises as a sapling before him
And as a root from arid land.

He had nor form nor beauty that we should
see him,

Nor comeliness that we should desire him.
 He was despised and forsaken of men ;
 A man of sorrows, acquainted with sickness.
 And when God hid His face from him,
 We despised him and considered him not.
 Yet 'twas but sickness from us he bore ;
 Pains we had inflicted were his burden,
 And we deemed him plagued,
 Stricken of God and afflicted.
 But he, though stricken through our sins,
 Though crushed through our iniquities,
 The bond of our peace he took upon him,
 And in his congregation was healing for us.¹
 We all had gone astray as sheep ;
 Each one had turned to his own way ;
 But the Lord afflicted only him—
 Smote him for the sin of us all.
 He was oppressed, was harshly persecuted,
 Silent endured and opened not his mouth.
 As a sheep to the slaughter he was led,
 As a lamb before the shearers was he dumb,
 Nor opened he his mouth.
 Of kingly rule and judgship was he deprived,

¹ The Hebrew for "stripe" is חֲבוּרָה not הַפּוּרָה

And his fate, who could tell it?
For he was cut off from the land of life,
Through the sin of the nation came affliction
unto him.

The wicked brought him to the grave,
The great and wealthy to his death,
Though violence he had never used
And deceit was not in his mouth.
But the Lord had willed his affliction and sick-
ness,

That he should yield himself as guilt offering,
(Nevertheless destruction was not God's plan,
but that)

He should see posterity, prolong days,
And the purpose of the Lord through his hand
should be fulfilled.

Through suffering he should gain insight,
Should learn to be content,
And with this knowledge propagate the right
And do My service unto the many whose sins
he bore.

Therefore shall I give him a portion among
the many,

With mighty ones booty shall he yet divide,

Because he laid bare to death his soul,
 And with sinners suffered himself to be counted,
 Whereas he had borne the sin of many
 And for sinners suffered himself to be stricken."

· · · · ·
 "Shout gladly, O barren one, that hath never
 borne,

Break forth in gladsome shouting and rejoice,
 Thou that hath never known the pains of
 child-birth,

For more are the children of the desolate one
 Than of her that hath a husband, saith the
 Lord.

Make broad the space of thy tent,
 The curtains of thy dwellings, let them ex-
 pand,

Keep them not back;
 Make long thy cords, thy pegs make firm,
 For to the right and to the left shalt thou
 spread forth.

Thy seed shall inherit nations,
 And desolate cities they shall inhabit.
 Fear not, thou shalt not be put to shame,
 Be not abashed, for thou shalt not grow pale.

For the shame of thy youth thou shalt forget,
The disgrace of thy widowhood no more re-
member.

For thy Lord and thy Creator, "Reconciler
of Contradictions" is His name,
And thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,
God of the whole earth is He called.

For as a wife forsaken and sad, the Lord re-
calls thee,
And as to the spouse of youth, once rejected,
does thy God speak.

For a short moment I forsook thee,
But with great love I take thee back.

In overwhelming wrath I hid my face a mo-
ment from thee,

But in everlasting mercy I have compassion
upon thee,

Saith thy Redeemer, the Lord.

For as Noah's flood is this unto me ;

For as I swore that Noah's flood should no
more come to pass,

Thus have I sworn no more to be wroth with
thee,

No more o'er thee my anger hot to pour.

Though the mountains should be moved
And the hills be shaken,
My mercy from thee shall not be moved,
And my covenant of peace shall not be shaken,
Saith He that hath compassion with thee, the
Lord.

O thou poor, storm-driven one, unconsol'd,
Behold, in rare clay shall I set thy stones,
With sapphires will I build thy fundaments.
Of crystal shall I make thy windows
Of flashing carbuncles thy gates,
And all thy boundary-walls of precious jewels.
And all thy children shall be disciples of the
Lord

And great shall be the peace of thy children.
Only through righteousness canst thou be
established ;

Keep far from oppression, for thou needst not
fear,

From terror, for it will not come nigh unto
thee

None shall fear aught but me, who, therefore,
among thee

Could fear that aught would befall thee?

Verily, I have created every artizan
That bloweth in the fire the coal
And bringeth forth a tool for his work;
I have created every destroyer
That begetteth evil and harm.
But no weapon, formed against thee, shall
succeed,
Every tongue that riseth 'gainst thee in judg-
ment, thou shalt refute ;
This is the inheritance of the servants of the
Lord
And of those whose righteousness is from me,
saith the Lord.
All ye that are thirsty, come to the water,
Ye that have no silver, come, buy and eat ;
Come, buy without silver and without price
Wine that revives and milk that nourisheth.
Why weigh ye out silver for that which is not
bread,
Your earnings for that which satisfieth not ?
Hearken unto me and eat that which is good
And may your soul be delighted with fatness.
And I will make with you an eternal covenant,
Even the ever faithful love of David.

For, behold, I gave him as a witness to the
peoples,

Communicating and enjoining duty to the
nations.

Behold, a people, which thou knowest not,
thou wilt call,

And nations, that know thee not, unto thee
will hasten,

Even to the Lord thy God, to the Holy One
of Israel, that maketh thee beautiful.

Seek ye the Lord, the ever present;

Call upon Him, the ever near.

Let the passionate forsake his way,

The man of violence his counsel,

Let him return to the Lord,

He will have compassion upon him;

Even to our God for He doth much forgive.

Verily, my thoughts are not your thoughts

And your ways are not my ways, saith the
Lord.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,

Thus are my ways high above your ways

And my thoughts above your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow fall from heaven

And return not thither again
Until it has watered and made it bear
And caused plants to spring forth ;
Thus also my word, which goeth forth from
 my mouth,
Shall not return empty unto me
Until it has done what I desired
And accomplished that for which I sent it.
In joy shall ye go forth, in peace return,
Mountains and hills shall greet you with joy-
 ful shouting
And all the trees of the field shall clap their
 hands ;
Beneath the thorn-bush the cedar shall rise ;
Beneath the thistle the myrtle shall spring
 forth ;
Shall remain, as glory to the Lord,
Reminder of hidden time, shall nevermore be
 uprooted.
Thus hath the Lord said, "Take heed of jus-
 tice !"
Practise righteousness ; then will my salvation
 soon come,
My righteousness then will soon be revealed.

Happy the man that practises this,
The son of Adam that holds fast to it,
Who gives heed to the Sabbath that he profane
it not,
Gives heed to his hand that it do no evil.
Neither should the stranger, that joins him-
self to the Lord,
Say, " Verily, the Lord will separate me from
His people ;"
Nor should the childless speak, " I am a dry
tree !"
For thus saith the Lord to the childless ones
who keep my Sabbaths,
Who choose what I desire and hold fast to my
covenant,
" Verily, I shall give them in My house, within
My walls,
A place and a name, better than sons and
daughters,
A name eternal, which shall never be cut off ;
And the sons of the stranger, who join them-
selves to the Lord
To serve Him, to love the name of the Lord,
Even to be unto Him as servants.

Whosoever gives heed to the Sabbath, not to
profane it,

Whosoever holdeth fast to my covenant,

I shall bring them all to My holy mountain,

I shall cause them all to rejoice in My house
of prayer,

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be
pleasing upon My altar,

For My house, a house of prayer shall it be
called for all the nations.

TENTH LETTER.

My light and sketchy brush-strokes have succeeded in reconciling you to the fate of your people ; nay, more, you are happy that you belong to this people, in spite of its poverty and lowliness—even because of them. What a glorious resulting of our correspondence, dear Benjamin ! But, when you conceive yourself exalted to the lofty summit of the idea of our mission and look upon the Law, which has as ostensible purpose the realization of this idea, you feel as though a yawning chasm intervened between you and it. You can not repress a feeling of sorrowing disapproval, a sensation of protesting wonderment when you think, that *that* is supposed to be the will of God ; nor do you see any real task, any ideal work to which you are called, nothing but praying and a passively-contemplative life, and in addition, unreasonable demands and senseless practices. But what

would you say, dear friend, if I were to tell you that the excessive pressure of centuries in its accumulated weight had finally only permitted the rescue of the externals of the Law, but that the spirit had no longer found room? What if I were to say that Israel, banished from the society of the rest of mankind, estranged from the world and its life, had lost contact and sympathy with the world and life, and no longer considered them in comprehending and interpreting the Law, but deemed itself fortunate to have rescued even its, the Law's, externals? Suppose I were to tell you that a dull and prosaic dialectic had reduced to merest mummies laws full to overflowing of life and spirit, and that Israel, concerned and apprehensive because of the errors and evils which it had often seen follow the efforts of the uncontrolled intellect, had driven it away from the Law as one drives away a bird of prey from a dearly-beloved corpse? Centuries of oppression and misery, which offered no opportunity for activity, which made patient endurance and resignation the sole duties;

when only prayer could give strength, and passive contemplation afforded the only consolation for the ills of life, must they not of necessity depress the spirit and compel the development of the narrow and restricted? If, furthermore, we say that the literary sources of Judaism, in which its spirit is contained, being misunderstood and misinterpreted, themselves aided in corporealizing and disguising the spirit; that a perverted intellect comprehended the institutions which were designed and ordained for the internal and external purification and betterment of man as mechanical, dynamical, or magical formulas for the upbuilding of higher worlds, and that thus the observances meant for the education of the spirit to a nobler life were but too frequently degraded into mere amuletic or talismanic performances; would you not admit, after all this, dear Benjamin, that you know only external Judaism, only an unrecognized, uncomprehended, misunderstood Judaism, and even that in a most fragmentary and incomplete form?

Forget whatever you know of Judaism, listen, as though you had never heard aught concerning its teachings, and you will not only be reconciled to the Law, but you will be filled with genuine love for it and willingly will you permit your whole life to be an expression and manifestation of this Law.

I shall give you now only fundamental principles, general outlines of the component parts of the Jewish doctrinal system, hardly anything but the nomenclature of terms and concepts, and shall leave both elucidation and demonstration for the future. Read my statements as though they were but hypotheses, but they are none.

Every opinion which I shall express is the result of many years' study of **שם, תנך** and **מדרש**;¹ every detail and every step finds its corroboration in the Gemara, if this latter be but comprehended according to the true meaning of its words and if, at every point, we put to ourselves the questions, "What have I heard here?" "What is the underlying con-

¹ Bible, Talmud, and Midrash.

cept of this statement?" "What its purpose?" "What the object of this symbolical act?" "What its natural meaning under the given conditions and purpose?" We must, furthermore, carefully distinguish between דאורייתא¹ and דרבנן², and seek to comprehend the former by comprehending the essence and nature of the thing enjoined, and the latter by making clear to ourselves the steps and means required for the proper carrying out and fulfillment of the Biblical law; nor must we omit to take account of the peculiarities of the original, which, having been intended primarily for oral transmission only, and not to be put into written form, which was expressly interdicted as a matter of principle, gives only the special rule, adapted for immediate application, but omits the universal, the spirit, leaving that for direct individual instruction or personal effort to ascertain.

After what has been now explained, I ask you, what do you expect in the Torah? You

¹ Biblical ordinances.

² Rabbinical ordinances.

will answer, revelation of conduct, how you, using the powers and faculties which are yours, may fulfill the will of God towards the beings by whom you are surrounded ; in other words, how you may practise justice and love with all and towards all.

Add to this also the idea of the mission of Israel as a people called not only to accomplish the fulfillment of these principles in life, but also to preserve and propagate their theoretic concepts for its own education and that of others. Join to it, furthermore, the laws and ordinances which derive their origin naturally from the state-life Israel once led and which, in the absence of land and state, became inapplicable, and you have the essential binding contents of the Torah.¹

(I) תורות. *Instructions or doctrines.* The historically revealed ideas concerning God, the world, the mission of humanity and of

¹ It is customary to divide the Mitzvoth in עשה and ל"ת, commands and prohibitions, but this is not essential for our purpose, for the same command may be, from one point of view, positive, from another, negative. E. g. לא תעשוק and לא יאכל חמץ and תאכל מצות or ביומו תתן שכרו

Israel, not as mere doctrines of faith or science, but as principles to be acknowledged by mind and heart, and realized in life. (2) **טשפטים**. *Judgments*. Statements of justice towards creatures similar and equal to yourself, by reason of this resemblance and equality, that is, of justice towards human beings. (3) **חקים**. *Arbitrary statutes*. Statements of justice towards subordinate creatures by reason of the obedience due to God; that is, justice towards the earth, plants, and animals, or, if they have become assimilated with your personality, towards your own body and soul. (4) **מצות**. *Commandments*. Precepts of love towards all beings without distinction, purely because of the bidding of God and in consideration of our duty as men and Israelites. (5) **עדות**. *Symbolic observances*. Monuments or testimonies to truths essential to the concept of the mission of man and of Israel. These testimonies are symbolic words or actions which bear a lesson for the individual Jew, collective Israel, or mankind in general. (6) **עבודה**.

Service or worship. Exaltation and sanctification of the inner powers by word-or-deed symbols to the end that our conception of our task be rendered clearer, and we be better fitted to fulfill our mission on earth.

As basal principles to these grand divisions of religion we have three concepts, justice, love, and education.

(1) Justice, that is, consideration for every being as creature of God, for all possessions as arrangements willed by God, of all governments and systems as ordained by God and fulfillment of all duties towards them incumbent upon us.

(2) Love, that is, kindly acceptance of all beings as children of God, as brethren; promotion of their welfare, and the endeavor to bring them to the goal set for them by God, without motive or benefit, but simply to fulfill the Divine will and command.

(3) Education, that is, the training of oneself and others to such work by taking to heart these truths as life-principles, by holding them fast and preserving them for one-

self and for others, and by endeavoring to regain them whenever the influences of worldly life have torn them from our possession.

Let us now go through them in detail and endeavor to comprehend each in the light of the principles upon which it is established.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

Toroth.—*Instruction or doctrines.*—Manifold are the lessons which these important constituents of the Divine system teach us. They comprise the instructions derived from the historically-revealed manifestations of Divine truth and which it is our duty to elevate into principles of our life.¹ They teach us to know God in his unity and as summoning us to comprehend our existence in all its many-sidedness and to unite all our powers, abilities, and conditions in subordination to the One.² They teach the active service-duty of all beings, including man, who must learn to look upon himself as one of the host of ministering attendants of Deity and willingly join their ranks.³ His will in this respect is revealed as unchangeable for all ages.⁴ Our experience is to serve us as

¹ Ex. xx : 2. ² Deut. vi : 4; iv : 39; Ex. xx : 3; Deut xviii : 13; Deut. xix : 26. ³ Deut. iv : 19, 20. ⁴ Deut. iv : 9; v : 19.

education; ¹ the fear of God is to be taught us by the recognition of His illimitable greatness, the love of God by consideration of His unending mercy and kindness, unshakeable trust in Him by appreciation of His eternal faithfulness. ²

They furthermore tend to ennoble thy inner character that it become pure and free of all that could drag thee down from the high pinnacle of thy holy mission. ³ They bid thee put aside pride and desire of sensual pleasure, ⁴ to respond sympathetically to the sorrow or joy of all beings, and to embrace them all in thy love as children of thy God. ⁵ These injunctions are but the applications of the principles demonstrated as true in the revelations given in the actions, in the mighty deeds, of God. His commandments are but the expressions of these principles; revealed as concepts, not as mere incomprehensible behests; whosoever desires truth will accept them.

¹ Deut. viii : 2. ² Deut. vi : 12, 13 ; iv : 40; vi : 16; vii : 19. ³ Deut. x : 12-16; Lev. xi : 44, 20, 7. ⁴ Deut. viii : 11; Deut. v : 18. ⁵ Deut. xv : 17; Lev. xiv : 18.

compense of injury to his person or possessions.¹ Have regard, also, to his rightful claim of truth;² of liberty, happiness, and peace of mind,³ of honor and undisturbed tranquillity.⁴ Do not abuse his weakness of heart, mind, or body;⁵ do not unjustly employ thy legal power over him.⁶

Chukkim.—*Arbitrary or apparently inexplicable Statutes.*—The same thoughtful regard which you show to man, show as well to every lower being; to the earth which bears and sustains all; to the world of animals and plants, to your own body, to your own mental faculties, to your “ego,” that which is most of all your own. It is the same justice which you owe to other human beings. What in the case of the Mishpatim results from the concept of identical personality, flows here from the fundamental notion of equal subordina-

¹ Exod. xxii : 4, 5, 21, 33, 35; Deut. xxii : 8; Exod. xxi : 18. ד"ן

² Exod. xxiii : 7; Lev. xix : 11. ד"ן, פ"ן ³ Exod. xxii : 20; Lev. xix : 34; Lev. xxv : 16; Lev. xix : 18. ד"ן ⁴ Lev. xix : 16; Deut. xvii : 5. י"י ⁵ Lev. xix : 14; Deut. xxvii : 18; xiii : 12. פ"ן, ד"ן, י"י

⁶ Exod. xx : 14; Lev. xix : 15; Exod. xxiii : 1, 6, 8; Deut. i : 16, ד"ן.

tion to God, who defends all which is lower in order and subject to you against your caprice and the ebullitions of unregulated will. Your duties towards humanity are more intelligible to you simply because you have only to think of yourself, your own views and feelings, in order to recognize and sympathize with the demands and needs of your fellow-man. Could you put yourself as thoroughly in the place of other beings, could you even understand the conditions of the union and the combined activity of your own body and soul, you would find it as easy to comprehend Chukkim as Mishpatim. They ask of you to regard all beings as God's possessions; destroy none; abuse none; waste nothing; employ all things wisely;¹ the kinds and species of plants and animals are God's order; mingle them not.² All creatures are servants in the household of creation.³ Respect even the feelings and desires of

¹ Deut. xx : 19; Lev. xxii : 24. וְיִחַז ה' לְכָל מַלְכִים of the ר"י Talma שבת, p. 67. א"ח ² Lev. xix : 19; Deut. xxii : 9, 11.
³ Deut. xxii : 6; Lev. xxii : 28. ר"י

beasts.¹ Respect the body of man even when the personality has departed.² Respect your own body as receptacle, messenger and instrument of the spirit.³ Limit and subdue your impulses and animal actions under the law of God that they be used in a manner truly human and holy for the upbuilding of the holy purpose of the human race, that man sink not into a mere beast.⁴ Respect your soul in nourishing your body; give the latter only so much and such food as will permit it to be a pure, obedient messenger of the world to the soul, of the soul to the world, but not such as to produce sluggishness or sensuality.⁵ Therefore conceal and elevate, do not esteem too highly thy animal part, in order that in the end all contradictory dispositions be eliminated from you, and even the beast-like become truly human.⁶ Finally, respect yourself in your purest emanation, your word.⁷

¹ Exod. xxiii : 5. $\Pi''\aleph \text{ ד}''\Pi$ ² Deut. xvi : 22. \aleph'' ³ Gen. ix : 5; Deut. iv : 9. $\text{ד}''\Pi \aleph''$ ⁴ Deut. xxiii : 10; Lev. xviii : 4-24. ⁵ Lev. xi; Deut. xiv. ⁶ Lev. xxiii : 10; Num. xxi : 21. ⁷ Num. xxx : 2 \aleph''

TWELFTH LETTER.

Mitzvoth.—*Commandments*.—The next requirement, which, though second in rank, gives life its completion and perfection, is love. Never be the instrumentality of curse or misfortune to yourself or your neighbor, but strive, like Deity, to do all your deeds in love, and thus become a blessing to yourself and your surroundings.¹ First become a blessing to yourself in order that you may become it to others. Seek to equip yourself with all the capacities and means which can be of good service to the welfare of your fellow beings; make yourself rich with abundant store of good and noble principles, and then devote yourself to the world for perfect service of blessing. To become the means of blessing, learn first to honor your parents as messengers of God, mankind, and Israel to you;² learn

¹ Deut. xxviii : 9; xiii : 4. ² Exod. xx : 12; Deut. v : 16; Lev. xix, 3.

also to revere wisdom, age, and virtue, as guides and models, wherever and whenever they appear realized in human character.¹ Illuminate yourself with the revealed wisdom of the Torah,² avoid the evil and seek the good.³

Strive ever to draw nearer to God, to be more closely united to Him in love and piety, more devoted and faithful to thy sacred mission on earth. Strive also to make the earth a truly human habitation, its creatures truly human possessions, in order that, in addition to your internal resources you may acquire also external wealth as means for carrying out your mission of blessing, and in order to be able independently to establish a house, as a temple in which shall be reared young scions of Adam's race as ideal human beings, ideal Israelites.⁴ For such purpose, to grace such a house, take a wife and bring her into your home.⁵ Next follows the first task of your blessed mission of love, the first and the

¹ Lev. xix : 32. ² Deut. v : 1 ; iv : 5. ³ Deut. xiii : 5 ; xiii : 8.
⁴ Genesis i : 28 ; Deut. xxxiv : 1. ⁵ Deut. xxv : 5 ; viii : 3. ⁶ ⁷ ⁸

highest; to be all in all to helpless human creatures without claim or demand upon you; even to sacrifice your own welfare in order that they shall be able to attain to both earthly well-being and spiritual ideal; that your child may become man-Israel.¹

Your mission, however, is not limited by the walls of your house; beyond their limits you must assist with every particle of your strength wherever it is necessary to save the life, the property, or the happiness of a human being,² to assist the enterprise of a fellow man with your strength or fortune,³ or to help suffering creatures of the lower order⁴ wherever you can, by the use of your wealth, your physical or intellectual strength, or your word, support the needy, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, console the mourning, heal the sick, care for the unprovided, advise those in need of counsel, teach the ignorant, reconcile those sundered by anger and quarrel — in a word,

¹ Deut. xxxiii : 4; iv : 9; vi : 6; xi : 17. פ"א, ד"ו ² Lev. xix : 10; Deut. xxii : 1. ³ Exod. xxiii : 5. פ"א ט"ח ⁴ Deut. xxii : 4; Exod. xxii : 5; ii : 22, 24; Lev. xxv : 35. ט"ח ד"ו

to be a blessing whenever and wherever you can.¹

You must not only yourself fulfill these requirements, but see to it, also, that the sources be preserved from which you and your contemporaries and posterity may derive enlightenment and incitement for such life and work—*Torah-preservation*.²

Nor should you remain alone and isolated; join yourself to a community, by which alone your work can be made universal and eternal in its results; on the one hand, the congregation,³ on the other, the state which harbors and protects you.⁴ Living thus, you will contribute your share to *sanctifying the Divine name*; you will become monument and witness to the sway of God and the duty of man; your Israelitish and non-Israelitish brethren as well, will derive enlightenment and courage from your example, and will learn to serve the only God as their God, and to love Him with

¹ Deut. xxiii : 9, 15, 7; Lev. xix : 17; Deut. vi : 18. ² Deut. xxxi : 19. פ"א ד'ו ³ Exod. xviii : 21. פ"א, ד'ו, מ"ב ⁴ Jeremiah xxix : 5. Lev. xxii : 31. ד'ו, מ"ב

all their hearts, with all their souls, and all their might. Thus will you be individually and in your restricted circle what it is the mission of your people to be everywhere and forever.

see p. 118
↑

THIRTEENTH LETTER.

Edoth. — *Symbolic Observances*. — The acknowledgment of the essential principles of life in righteousness and love does not suffice to actually build up such a life, nor is it even sufficient for the accomplishment of your mission as Israelite, as bearer of the law of God to man, actually to live in accordance with those fundamental principles; there is need, in addition thereto, of symbolic words and actions which shall stamp them indelibly upon the soul, and thus preserve them for you and for others. A truth, in order to produce results, must be impressed upon the mind and heart repeatedly and emphatically. This is the essential concept of the Edoth. The symbols are chiefly those of actions, of practices which serve as signs of an idea. Thus the doctrine that God is the creator and possessor of all; that all is His; man the admin-

trator according to His will, and Israel the teacher of the law of humanity's mission, is symbolized in the commandments בכור, the sanctity of the first-born, חלה, the giving of the portion of dough, ערלה, the prohibition of the use of immature fruit, חרש, the prohibition of the use of the new grain previous to the offering of the measure of barley, שבת, the Sabbath, and in reference to Israel's holy soil through the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, תרומה ויוכל שמטה, the heave-offering and בכורים, the offering of the first ripe fruits.

The doctrine that God is the Redeemer and Savior of Israel, and also He that revealed His holy law to His chosen nation, is symbolized by פסח, the Passover festival, שבועות, the Feast of Weeks, סכות, the Feast of Tabernacles and שמיני עצרת, the Eighth day of Solemn Assembly. That God is to us in exile what He was to our ancestors, is symbolized in חנוכה, Hanuccah, the Memorial of the Re-dedication of the Temple and in פורים, Purim, the Memorial of the deliverance from Haman. Acknowledgment that the spirit

vivifies the body and that law is needful as a regulation to freedom is symbolized in the ספירה, the counting of the days between Passover and the Feast of Weeks. Consideration of the causes of the exile and warning to shun the sins which have led thereto are inculcated by the תעניות, fast days. To keep even the body and its organs pure and holy, and to shun all that leads to bestiality is taught by מילה, circumcision. To dedicate all the powers of our mind, heart, and body to the service of the All-One is the lesson of תפלין, the Phylacteries. Reminder of the presence of the Invincible One and of His revelation in the past, limitation and repression of sensuality as a weapon for battle against evil, are the purposes of ציצית, the show-threads. Consecration of the Jewish home as a temple of God, of the Jewish life therein as a perpetual service of God, is the aim of מזוזה, the sacred inscription on the door posts. Recognition of the Jacob-state in Israel, that is, of the lack of external might and independence as a requirement of a truly

spiritual conception of the Israel-mission to teach the revelation of God, is symbolized in the **מִצֵּה**, bread of affliction, and **גֵּיד הַנֶּשֶׂה**, prohibition of the sinew of the hip that was lamed.

A wise appreciation and use of property, equally removed from the two extremes of scorn and over-estimation, is taught by **לוּלֵב**, the palm-branch of the Succoth festival, and by **סוּכָה**, the symbolic booth. As concerns the land of Israel, the same lesson is taught by **מַעֲשֵׂרוֹת**, the tithe-offering. Finally, that highest and most solemn thought known to religion, that God is the supreme Ruler, Judge, and Father; that it is our duty to scrutinize our doings in life in order to know whether they really come up to the high demands of the Holy Law; that it is our duty, when necessary, to recognize and confess our short-comings, which have deprived us of our claim to life, and made us dependent for existence and preservation solely upon the Divine mercy, and that it is incumbent upon us to strive to lift ourselves up to a higher plane and

a purer future ; these sublime and holy truths are taught by ר"ה ו"כ, the New Year and Atonement-day, by שופר ור"ח, by the solemn blast of the ram's-horn, by the rites of the New Month.¹ These symbolic acts and seasons all give expression to ideas, without splitting them up into words as speech must. They come to the mind each a unit, like thought itself, and like the resolve which they should beget; they present themselves with all the force of a single, undivided, and indi-

¹ In giving this sketchy and superficial account of the *Mitzvoth* (Commandments), and particularly in regard to the *Edoth* and *Abodah* (symbolic practices and worship), I must presuppose that the *Mitzvoth* are, in general, known to you from your study of Bible and Talmud, or from their practical exemplification in life. It is not my purpose to describe the *Mitzvoth* themselves. You will find difficulty in harmonizing some of them with the concepts given here. My intention is only to state the concepts under which I arrange them in my mind, merely as a sort of inscription upon the receptacles, in which they are contained, in order to arouse in you the desire to become more thoroughly acquainted with their contents, and also to give you data to settle for yourself the question, "Is this really the concept of the *Mitzvoth*?"

To *demonstrate* that this and many other theories of mine are really correct and true, I reserve, as I have already frequently mentioned, for a future work.

visible appeal to the soul. Therefore they are appropriate vehicles to convey the sentiments of a single united nation pervaded with one thought, actuated by one resolve, and are intelligible beyond the confines of Israelitish nationality. Every single detail of action or omission in the *Edoth*-division of the Law is a writing, a word, a speech addressed to the reverent devotee; they are, all of them, reminders to the soul or vivid expressions of sentiment by means of significant action-language. The greatest and the least of them, even the never-enough-to-be-ridiculed prohibition of the use of an egg laid on Sabbath or holiday, symbolically teach a lesson, and the strict attention paid to so-called trifles is not more worthy of ridicule and not less sensible than your care to use a clear and intelligible language or a legible and neat handwriting. Let us take, for instance, the law of Sabbath, with its prohibition of labor. Many of the minor details of what our Sages technically call מלאכה, "labor," we would hardly recognize as such, and yet not even the pettiest

and most insignificant thereof but has its reason and definite purpose.

The day upon which the newly-created world first lay extended in its completeness before man that he might possess and rule over it, this day was to be to him an eternal monument of the great truth that all around him was the possession of God, the Creator, and that God it was who had conferred upon him the power and the right to rule it, in order that he should not grow overweening in his dominion and should administer his trust as the property of God and in accordance with His supreme will. In order to retain this idea ever fresh and vivid, he should refrain on this day from exercising his human sway over the things of earth, should not place his hand upon any object for the purpose of human dominion, that is, to employ it for any human end; he must, as it were, return the borrowed world to its Divine Owner in order to realize that it is but lent to him. On this account the labor forbidden on the Sabbath is chiefly מלאכת מחשבת, that is to say, *productive ac-*

tivity, executed consciously, with purpose and proper means, in order to produce a certain result, an action, therefore, which is the outcome of human will and conscious force, not, however, קלקול, "an action which produces no desired result," מתעסק, "purposeless occupation," שאינו מתכוון, "unintentional work," שאינה צריכה לגופה, "in itself unnecessary," כלאחר יד, "indirectly performed," or not in שעור, "proper measure and proportion." Do you not see that every moment of the Sabbath that you restrain your hand from labor you proclaim God the only Creator and Master and yourself as his servant? Do you not see that even the slightest, least arduous, productive action on the Sabbath involves the denial of God as Creator and Lord, and the usurpation on your part of the throne of God? The desecration of the Sabbath is therefore equivalent to the entire rejection and negation of the Israel-mission. Do you not recognize that the Sabbath is not a mere day of physical recuperation, but that it is ברית, "a covenant," זכרון, "a sacred memorial,"

אות, "a profoundly instructive sign?" It is קודש, a sacred day which is not instituted solely that man may rest after the labors of the week which is past, but may consecrate himself to the tasks of the week which is to come.

The Sabbath is thus an institution of vast significance, but not it alone, every one of the many ordinances which constitute the *Edoth* is similarly laden with great and invaluable instruction, and both those ordinances deducible from the plain word of Scripture, דאור"תא, and those established by Rabbinical interpretation, דרבנן, are equally instructive and important.

FOURTEENTH LETTER.

The last division of the Holy Law, Abodah (service or worship), remains for our consideration.

Abodah, the service of God; it means to turn away from the ambitions, the occupations, and the sins which mainly constitute our material existence, and to strive to regain the eternal verities of the higher life when they have gone astray from us in the deceptions, errors, conflicts, and temptations of the world.

עבודה שכל, heart service, our Sages love to call true devotion; that is, to fulfill the will of God towards our inner parts by purifying and ennobling our unseen power, our character.

תפלה, prayer, is our chief form of serving the Supreme One in the present age, but the Hebrew conception of prayer is not the mere request or petition for Divine aid, nor even a mere ecstasy of devotion and adoration; it

means the possession and expression of proper conceptions and resolutions concerning our own personality and our duties toward God, the world, and mankind. In former days the sacrificial rite was the expression of our service of God; its ordinances and ceremonies were symbolic actions of profound significance. The Temple, the dwelling of the Torah, itself Israel's most sacred possession, taught the lesson that the Law was God's gift to Israel (אֲרוֹן), and that for its fulfillment God had given unto man the power of body and mind. (מִנּוּרָה and שְׁלַחֵן.) The sacrifices, each inculcates its individual meaning, the suppression of sensuality,¹ of selfishness,² the consecration of life,³ of the sentiments,⁴ of one's entire personality,⁵ to God for the fulfillment of his Law. Some of them typify the endeavor to consecrate oneself to God through the Torah,⁶ others the effort to regain lost purity of life by the suppression of sensuality and selfishness, equivalent to return to the

קטורת¹ זריקת דם-ים² הקטרת חלב³ הקטרת כבוד and כליות⁴
 עולה⁵ עולה⁶

Law; ¹ others, again, the recognition of God as the Giver of the great good things of life or the Preserver of our peace and happiness. ² This recognition of the Divine benevolence must be complete, sincere, and free from every material and sensual thought. Our gratitude must be extended to Him because He has given us so much which we can consecrate to the fulfillment of His holy will as revealed in the Torah. These symbolic actions were all accompanied by the living word of fervent devotion. (See Maimonides **הלכות תמידים**, Chap. vi.) The temple is sunk into ruins, but the living word of worship and instruction remains, completer even than in former times, because the symbolic rites of sacrifices must be represented also by it. The aim of our worship, **תפלה** from **התפלל**, is the purification, enlightenment, and uplifting of our inner selves to the recognition of the Most High and our duties towards Him in truth; not mere stirring up of the emotions, swiftly-vanishing devotion,

¹ תודה and **אשם** ² **שלמים** and **חטאת**

empty sentimentalism, and unreasoning tears, but the cleansing of thought and heart.

Life robs us of the correct judgment concerning God, the world, man, and Israel, and concerning our own relation to them. Leaving the disturbing influences of life and turning to God, you can approach and find Him in the mystic contemplations of the Tefillah. All the various component parts of the Hebrew worship subserve this great purpose, the bringing of man into communication with Him who is concealed from view in his (man's) daily life. תהלות, the psalms or praises; they show us ecstatic visions of God in nature, the world of man and in Israel. תפלות, the prayers or devotions; they stir up our nature to its deepest depths and lift us up to communion with the Divine. תורות, thanksgivings and בקשות, supplications; they express our profound gratitude for all that Deity has wrought and our full and unrestricted acknowledgment that everything past or future proceeds from His hands, and our humble petition that He may continue His bounty

unto us, though we be unworthy. תחנון, humble appeals to His unfailing mercy to heal our weaknesses and backslidings. The scientific foundation and basis upon which all this edifice of worship is raised is the קריאת התורה, "reading of the Law," which imparts unto us the instruction and wisdom which we require; its utmost summit and goal, the perfect fruit of our piety, are the ברכות, benedictions, which supply us the firm resolution actively to promote the fulfillment of the Divine will in the midst of life, so busy with transitory cares and devoted pre-eminently to material aims. Retain these sketchy outlines in your mind, and bearing them in memory contemplate afresh our prayers, our service as a whole, and see if you do not find it more dignified, fuller of meaning and importance than you had ever before imagined.

"*Schools*," that is, schools, we call our houses of worship, and that is what they should be, schools for the grown-up, for those who have long since exchanged the

tasks of the schoolmaster for the problems of life.

And now, my dear Benjamin, a law which bids us recognize God in the world and in mankind, which teaches that the fulfillment of His will is our mission, which shows us in Him the Father of all beings, of all men and in every creature, every human being our brother; a law which makes our whole life service of God through the practice of righteousness and love toward all beings and the proclaiming of these truths for ourselves and others; can this be a law which stunts the mind and the heart, limits every joy of life and turns men into secluded monks? Can it be that the study of this law, when pursued earnestly and intelligently, perverts and deadens the mind, narrows or restricts the impulses of the heart?

Its true description is found in the words of the sweet singer of Israel:

“ The heavens declare themselves
Revelation of God’s glory;
The thin sheet of space (declares)

That it is His handiwork.
Day proclaims to day
That God has spoken;
Night after night revives
The thoughts of Deity.
No speech we need,
No words are spoken,
Without them the voice is heard.
Through all the earth their voice goes forth,
To the end of the earth-world their words.
In them He hath set the tent of the sun,
Which it leaves as a bridegroom his canopy;
It rejoices, as the Almighty, to run its course.
And yet fixed in heaven is its issue,
Its circuit reaches ever the same end,
None are hidden from his sun.
But only the law of God is complete,
Giving answer to th' inquiring soul;
The testimony of God alone is faithful,
Giving wisdom to th' unlearned;
Th' ordinances of God are righteous,
Giving joy to the heart;
The commands of God are clear,
Giving light to the eyes;

The fear of God is pure,
Existing forever;
The judgments of God are true,
They are right altogether,
Better than gold and much ore,
Sweeter than honey and dripping comb.
O, that Thy servant might be illumed by them!
To keep them is the great path of life.”
(Ps. xix.)

FIFTEENTH LETTER.

You tell me, my dear Benjamin, that you have taken as your device the utterance of the Psalmist, "O, that Thy servant might be illumed by them, to keep them is the great path of life;" that you have vowed to know no rest until you have gained this inner light; to establish not your house until you have added to your rich store of external goods the internal treasures of the Torah, in order that you may be able to use your possessions worthily and in accordance with the will of God, and in order that your house be established in the Torah-spirit for Israel—humanity.

These words are to me proof and guarantee that I have not written in vain.

Do come to me in accordance with your resolution; you have my most cordial invitation, and I shall endeavor to explain to you verbally and in detail what you now have become acquainted with in mere sketchy outlines. Do

not expect, however, to find in me an infallible master. I shall confess to you honestly whenever I myself am in doubt and darkness, and shall endeavor to incite you thus to independent research. You wish me to spare myself the trouble of refuting your first letter; you have examined it thoroughly in the light of your new knowledge and answered it yourself. I am, indeed, overjoyed that you have done so. I have, however, already prepared my answer, although only in the first rough cast. I send it to you so that you may compare it with your own thoughts; you need expect nothing more than fragments of thoughts. It was but natural that you found Judaism in contradiction to your conception of the purpose of human existence, inasmuch as your conception was one which Judaism rejects, and against whose lower elements, desire of pleasure and deification of material possessions, it wages unceasing warfare.

These lower potencies in the materialistic view of the world are somewhat refined and spiritualized by the higher professors of that

system, but are not essentially altered or abrogated. The essential notion of this system is either that of the world without an active God or of God without a world that serves Him. Judaism takes another and a higher view, and predicates even the highest and best as means only to that higher end. Doubtless you now comprehend our national misfortunes as the product of our national shortcomings, shortcomings which do not, by any means, however, lower us in point of righteousness below the standard of the other nations. Israel never committed a sin which the other nations of the world did not also commit. But the standard applied to Israel was a higher one; what Deity readily pardons to others He would not forgive to us; the destruction of the Israel-state, which had fallen short of its high ideals, was the direct consequence of these universal sins; it was a part of the Divine administration of Israel's career.

“And God punished in him the sin of us all.”

Israel's material weakness and deprivation

of worldly joys and glory seem to you now a part of the scheme of its God-revealing existence; you realize that the external humility of the nation's lot did not disturb its mission nor diminish its greatness. It simply exchanged one kind of greatness for another, and in dispersion there was opened to it a new and broader field for the fulfillment of its mission.

And as for the Law, is it really a preventative of all the joys of life, a hindrance and an obstacle to the gratification of the natural human craving for pleasure? Examine once the precepts and ordinances of the Law from beginning to end and tell me what legitimate desire it forbids to gratify, what natural impulse it would destroy or extirpate.

On the contrary, it purifies and sanctifies even our lower impulses and desires by applying them with wise limitation to the purposes designated by the Creator.

Righteousness is the Law's typical end and aim, the gratification of physical lust and passion is never its object. Therefore are the

lower cravings subordinated to higher law and limited by the Creator's wisdom for His infinitely wise purposes; but as means of attaining proper and necessary ends, the Law recognizes these desires as perfectly moral, pure, and human, and their carrying out as just and as legitimate as the fulfillment of any other human task or mission.

What the Law, however, firmly and unyieldingly opposes is the deification of wealth and lust as the sole aim and controlling impulse of our lives; but it not only permits their pursuit within the limits set by Divine wisdom, but declares the effort to gain them a duty as sacred and binding as any other human obligation, and condemns the purposeless and unreasonable abstinence from permitted indulgences as sin.¹ How could the reverse of this be possible? Is it conceivable that God would bestow upon man any power or capacity and then, by utter prohibition of its use, legally annihilate it? Highest and truest worship is it to be "joyous before the

¹ תענית ו' א and כ"ב

Lord;" to pass one's life in gladsome lightness of spirit because of the consciousness that we live under the eye of God and that His protecting hand is ever outstretched to guide and guard us in every danger and trial; to think and feel, to speak and work, to enjoy and to endure. Then, through a higher comprehension of them both, shall we be reconciled to suffering and happiness alike, realizing that all our varied experiences belong to our task, and that our only eternal purpose in life is joyously to solve its problems.

Has this people furnished no contribution to the great edifice of human civilization? I shall not ask whether any of the other peoples ever consciously did anything with a view to the furtherance of universal human happiness. I shall not ask whether they did not all seek only their own welfare, nor whether they ever performed any deed of general value except unconsciously, as blind instruments in the hand of God; neither shall I inquire whether all was indeed productive of blessing, but I shall, indeed, challenge the world to

deny that Israel, consciously, and at the sacrifice of its earthly peace and well-being, saved as a palladium from the shipwreck of its fortunes the only thing through which science, culture, art, and inventive skill could become the means of bringing true blessing and salvation to the world. Is there any truer greatness for men than to be the bearers of revealed instruction concerning God and the duty of man, and to show by example and life that there are higher things than wealth and pleasure, than science and culture, to which these should be but subordinate means of fulfillment?

Does not this law erect a wall of separation between its adherents and the rest of mankind? It does, I admit, but had it not done so Israel would long since have lost all consciousness of its mission, would long since have ceased to be itself. Do you not perceive what struggles the preservation of the true Israel-spirit in our midst requires, despite this separation? How, then, could the holy flame have been kept burning in our breasts had there

been no distinctive laws and ordinances to remind us that we are consecrated to a sacred duty, a Divine mission? But whosoever *honestly* thinks that our isolation is the result of pride or of hostility to our fellow beings is the victim of a deplorable delusion. Is not God the loving Father of all creatures, of all human beings?

Has Israel any other task than to teach all the races of man to recognize and worship the Only-One as their God? Is it not Israel's unceasing duty to proclaim through the example of its life and history Him as the Universal Lord and Sovereign? The Bible terms Israel סגולה, "a peculiar treasure," but this designation does not imply, as some have falsely interpreted, that Israel has a monopoly of the Divine love and favor, but, on the contrary, that God has the sole and exclusive claim to Israel's devotions and service; that Israel may not render Divine homage to any other being.¹ Israel's most cherished ideal

¹ סגולה means a property belonging exclusively to one owner, to which no other has any right or claim. Compare ב"ק ד"ז

is that of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Almost every page of the prayers we utter contains supplication for the hastening of this consummation. We are all helping to rear a great edifice, Divinely ordained for the well-being of man; all nations that were or are anywhere upon the surface of the earth, whether in the east or the west, the north or the south, each with its life and its disappearance from the stage of history, with its successes and its failures, with its virtues and its vices, its wisdom and its folly, its rise and its fall, in a word, with whatsoever it leaves to posterity as the sum total of the results and products of its existence.

All of these efforts and actions are bricks contributed to the edifice of human history; all tend to the carrying out of the plan of the one, same God.¹

This is the lesson of the life of all the good and virtuous of all nations, of whatsoever

¹ חסידיו א"ה יש להם חלק להם לעולם הבא is a saying of the sages which may be interpreted as meaning that all nations will help to work out the historical destiny of humanity.

gave the example of unselfish righteousness and the true dignity of humanity; this is what has been striven for by all whose souls have been illumed by light from on high and who, by word or deed, have helped to lift their brethren up to the All-One, to diffuse respect for justice and to elevate man above the beast; the same result is attained by the art of the Greeks when morally pure and devoted to the refinement of the mind, and of their science, when sharpening the intellect to the better apprehension of truth; even the sword of the Roman and the peaceful commerce of the European have united nations in brotherhood for the working out of the same ideals:—and Israel has done and will do its share of the glorious task.

Is not the spirit prostrated and degraded by the absolute devotion which this law requires, so that the observant Jew loses the courage and the strength which free contact with the world and participation in its affairs give? The question is a familiar one and often put, but I ask you, “Whom do you respect more,

who is really the stronger, the downtrodden Jew, who possesses in the dust of humility sufficient strength of mind and character to pity his opponent and to accept the scorn heaped upon him as a trial sent by God and as a part of the destiny of his nation, or the ruffian, who, in his overweening pride, abuses the weakness of his fellow man, seems to consider himself privileged to revile the feeble and impotent and to find therein his claim to greatness? ”

Do not say that this conception of God, the world, and humanity clogs the progress of science, and as for art, the plastic arts, why, since men began to forget the All-One and to deify His creatures, even to worship their own animal impulses, whose omnipotence they felt, and to glorify them in symbols of stone, so that every god statue became a sad memento of human degradation; since then, truly, Judaism interdicts the making and possession of such images, for to it truth is higher and greater than art. Certainly, no artist inspired with the true spirit of Judaism would

take the chisel, the brush, or the pencil in his hand to form an art-work adapted only to stir up impure imaginations and to rouse the animal in man; for, if such productions of art be deemed useful and proper, then are morality and virtue mere empty words and not, as we conceive them to be, in reality the standard and the measure of our actions.

You speak of dogmas, dogmas of faith! In answer thereto, I would briefly say that Judaism enjoins six hundred and thirteen duties, but knows no dogmas. The sublime truths which lie at its basis, it reveals as axioms, clearly intelligible to all who have ears to hear and minds to comprehend, and in this way opens a field for the broadest investigation and profoundest research into the essence and relations of all things to each other; it rouses us to the endeavor to understand the world, man, human history, and God's plan operating therein. In this effort personal study and thought, universal human experience and the Torah are to be alike utilized, for the latter is as real and actual a source of instruction as

the two former. True speculation does not consist, as many would-be thinkers suppose, in closing the eye and the ear to the world round about us and in constructing out of our own inner Ego a world to suit ourselves; true speculation takes nature, man, and history as facts, as the true basis of knowledge, and seeks in them instruction and wisdom; to these Judaism adds the Torah, as genuine a reality as heaven or earth. But it regards no speculation which does not lead to active, productive life as its ultimate goal; it points out the limits of our understanding and warns us against baseless reasoning, transcending the legitimate bounds of our intellectual capacity, however brilliantly put together and glitteringly logical it may appear to be, for all such intellectual pyrotechnics are, after all, but puerile sport, useful chiefly to still the conscientious scruples of a sensual nature, oblivious alike to the limitations and the ideals of humanity. To be sure, the Jewish spirit, in its most recent form, was chiefly devoted to abstract and abstruse speculation; a vivid con-

sciousness of the real world was lacking, and therefore the object of study was not what it should chiefly have been, the attainment of knowledge of duty, for use in the world and in life. Study became the end instead of the means, the subject of investigation became a matter of indifference, the dialectic subtleties thereof the chief concern; people studied Judaism but forgot to search for its principles in the pages of Scripture. That method is, however, not truly Jewish; our great masters have always protested against it; many pages of the classic works of Jewish literature are filled with the objections of their authors to this false and perverted method. Bible and Talmud are to be studied with one sole object in view, to ascertain the life-duties which they inculcate, ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות, "to learn and to teach—to observe and to do," and every topic treated of in the Law should be viewed objectively or a comprehension thereof obtained from science. There is no science which trains the mind to a broader and more practical view of things than does

the Torah, pursued in this manner. That the Law, which lays down Reverence, Love, and Faithfulness as its three foundation-stones, does not cripple the heart, but that, when comprehended and assimilated to the mind, its fulfillment becomes a new power, a life from within, not a mere barren and external dwarf of existence, stimulating all the faculties to a freer development and a more intense use—you have already demonstrated by your adhesion.

“Chasid,” pious one! a glorious name, but misunderstood and deformed through ignorant or malicious misconception coming from without; the true חסיד is he who devotes himself in love entirely to the service of the Higher Power, who does not seek for himself aught, but relinquishes his claims upon the world in order that he may live more actively and carry out more thoroughly works of love for the world; he does not withdraw from its midst, but lives in it, with it, and for it. The Chasid is for himself, nothing; for the world, everything. David, therefore, who labored

from his earliest youth continuously and exclusively for the internal and external well-being of his people, and who left the reparation of the injury done him by Saul and the disposal of his own affairs to the wisdom of Deity alone; he, indeed, deserves to be called חסיד. You know the Rabbinical definition of the term "שלך שלך ושלי שלך חסיד." He who says, "That which is thine is thine and mine is also thine, is a Chasid," but a life of seclusion devoted only to meditation and prayer is not Judaism. Study and worship are but paths which lead to work, תלמוד מעשה גדול שמביא לידי מעשה. "Great is study, for it leads to practical fulfillment of the precepts," is a saying of our sages, and the flower and fruit of our devotions should be the resolve to lead a life of activity, pervaded with the spirit of God. Such a life is the only and universal goal.

As for the causes which produced these errors in the theory and practice of life, we shall speak of them, perhaps, on some later occasion.

But how about the difficulty of obeying this law in our time—the trouble which it causes while travelling, in intercourse with Gentiles, and in business? I will admit, for the sake of argument, that all the complaints which the children of the age give utterance to concerning the difficulty and trouble of obeying the Jewish law are true. If our view of life is earnest and serious; if we comprehend Judaism as the charge with which we are entrusted, and which we are to bear through time and tribulation; if we realize that it is our life-code of duty, can the difficulty, the burdensomeness of an obligation dispense us from its fulfillment? Should it not rather make the duty of fulfillment more solemn and urgent?

But let us examine the alleged difficulties more closely—from the standpoint of the spirit of Judaism—and they will disappear altogether. We will take up your last first—business.

O! son of age, do you really think that you cannot fulfill the Law because it commands

your business to cease during one-seventh of your time, in order that you should thereby manifest your conviction that in God is the source of your strength and your right to the possession of the world; that from Him comes the blessing, and in order that you may consecrate yourself and make yourself worthy to use His blessings as sacred, Divine gifts according to His desire; do you really deem yourself unable to obey the Law, because it asks you to reserve another seventeenth of your time, not for the ordinary tasks of daily existence, but to lead your thoughts again to your mission as an Israelite, and to strengthen you to fulfill properly your nation's allotted task on earth?

Son of the present! do you not blush to utter such a complaint? Certainly, if you consider yourself born only to possess and to enjoy; if the quantity and extent of your possessions and enjoyments are for you the measure of your importance; if you look upon these things, not as a means, but as ends in themselves; if you think that your business

activity is essentially different from that of the agriculturist, who can do no more than to place the seed in the earth, but must look to the blessing of God's sun and God's rain to ripen and develop it; if you believe that your strength and the power of your hand can carry the edifice of your prosperity to its summit; not God, but you alone, and that all other considerations must yield to this one ambition, then—then, indeed —— !

Not so is the spirit of Judaism ! If you would comprehend the Sabbath and its beautiful, ideal lessons; if you would realize that in and through it are given to you at once the basis of your earthly task, and its sublimest, most spiritual fulfillment; that it proclaims you a witness that a God, that *one* God is, and that man is created for His service; if, on the other hand, you would thoroughly reflect on all the insane monstrousness of the thought, "for the sake of gain to desecrate the Sabbath;" in order to gain my daily bread or to increase my wealth, that I may possess the means better to fulfill my duties to God, I

deny that there is a God to whom belongs the world and the fullness thereof; I deny that from Him come life and its blessings, I affirm that wealth and the gratification of desire are my only purpose, fulfillment of my will my only object; I negate both God and the mission of humanity; . . . surely, these reflections should cause you to let fall again the hand which lust for gain had raised to desecrate the Sabbath. Yes, if you would but contemplate your life in the spirit of the Sabbath, if you would for but one single moment comprehend yourself as viewed by the eternal gaze of God, as the Sabbath teaches that you are; if you would comprehend yourself as vivified of God, in a God-filled world, the totality of its life directed by God; if you would feel yourself child and servant of the All-One; all your existence dependent upon the will of the All-Only Father and Lord, every breath His gift, every faculty His offering, every event in your history His doing; you, His servant, your whole life fulfillment of His commandments; — would you then still comprehend

your present complaint? You would then comprehend that your longing to possess is but one of your duties, and essentially the same as any of the others, and esteem your possessions, not according to the amount of the property you have acquired, but according to the degree of compliance with the Divine commandments you have observed in accumulating it, as well as in using and applying it; you would understand that though the six days bring you the external means of fulfilling your mission, the seventh alone can afford you the inner means, spiritual power and consecration, and that these blessed results can only be attained if both gain and disposal be in accordance with the Divine precept; you would see that since God it is who has given you power to earn and blessing in the accumulation, He is also rich and strong enough to shower upon your dwelling so much manna in six days that on the seventh you would not lack, then you would feel that you do not, because of that complaint, cease to be a Jew, but that you must have ceased to be a Jew, in

the only true and real sense, before you could utter such a complaint. "But how about intercourse with non-Jews? One makes oneself so conspicuous, is recognized at once as a Jew!" Son of the present, who tells you to deny or conceal the fact that you are a Jew? Be a Jew; be it really and truly; endeavor to attain to the ideal of the true Jew in fulfillment of the law of justice, righteousness, and love, then will you be respected, not in spite of the fact that you are a Jew, but because of it; comprehend yourself as Jew, and disseminate that comprehension by word and deed among your non-Jewish brethren, and you will have no occasion to complain that your Judaism cannot travel incognito. "But one cannot become truly intimate, truly sociable, if one does not, at least, eat and drink with them at their banquets!" Again, I would say, practise righteousness and love as the Holy Law bids you; be just in deed, truthful in word, bear love in your heart for your non-Jewish brethren, as your Law teaches you; feed his hungry, clothe his naked, console his mourners, heal his sick.

counsel his inexperienced, assist him with counsel and deed in need and sorrow, unfold the whole noble breadth of your Israeldom, and can you think that he will not respect and love you, or that there will not result as great a degree of social intimacy as your life can concede?

But you would have more; the right to enter into his family as a member thereof! Do you not see that, until the advent of the age of universal brotherhood, you should not, cannot, desire that? Not, however, on account of enmity or hostility, but because of your Israel-mission. You cannot be angry with the Law, if it interdicts for you marriage alliance outside of Israel, because you should rear your children, the most precious pledges of the Divine love, only for His Torah, and it would mean to lead them away from the Torah, if you would not be to them an Israelitish father, or would give them other than an Israelitish mother. You must be grateful, therefore, to the Law that it seeks to prevent the sons of Israel from amorous attachment to

non-Israelitish daughters or non-Israelitish sons to the daughters of Israel.

Comprehend the object of your life, comprehend the Israel-duty, and there will disappear as a thin mist all the alleged difficulty of upholding Judaism, felt so keenly in our time only because the Israel-spirit has vanished, or because Israel's sons know not nor respect themselves; because they even, in part, demand the violation of the Israel-duty.

SIXTEENTH LETTER.

You ask me for my opinion on the question which at present agitates so greatly the minds of men, emancipation; whether I consider it feasible and desirable, according to the spirit of Judaism, our duty to strive to attain it. The new conception of Judaism which you have gained, dear Benjamin, has rendered you uncertain as to the reconcilability of Gentile citizenship with the eternal ideals of our faith. You have begun to doubt whether the acceptance of these new relations be in harmony with the spirit of Judaism, inasmuch as it approximates to a close union with that which is different and alien, and a severance of the ties

¹ This letter is explained through the circumstance that at the time of its composition the emancipation of the Jews was not yet an accomplished fact in most European states, though everywhere proposed and discussed. It is remarkable with what accuracy Hirsch comprehended the nature of his brethren and how literally his apprehensions of a misunderstanding of the purpose of emancipation by a great section of the Jewish people have been fulfilled. (The Translator.)

which bind us to the Israel lot; you doubt its desirability, because through over much intimacy with the Gentile, Israel's peculiar characteristics could easily be obliterated. I respect your scruples, and will communicate to you my own opinion. Let us first examine whether it be in harmony with the spirit of Judaism.

When Israel began its great wandering through the ages and nations, Jeremiah proclaimed the following as its duty:

“Build houses and dwell therein;¹ plant gardens and eat the fruit thereof; take wives unto yourselves, and beget sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage that they bear sons and daughters, and that you multiply there and diminish not. And seek the peace of the city whither I have exiled you, and pray for it to the Lord, for in its peace there will be unto you peace.”

To be pushed back and limited upon the path of life is, therefore, not an essential con-

¹ Jeremiah xvix : 5-9.

dition of the Galuth, Israel's exile state among the nations, but, on the contrary, it is our duty to join ourselves as closely as possible to the state which receives us into its midst, to promote its welfare and not to consider our well-being as in any way separate from that of the state to which we belong.

This close connection with all states is in nowise in contradiction to the spirit of Judaism, for the former independent state life of Israel was not even then the essence or purpose of our national existence, was only a means of fulfilling our spiritual mission.

Land and soil were never Israel's bond of union, but only the common task of the Torah; therefore, it still forms a united body, though separated from a national soil; nor does this unity lose its reality, though Israel accept everywhere the citizenship of the nations amongst which it is dispersed. This coherence of sympathy, this spiritual union, which may be designated by the Hebrew terms **עם** and **גוי**, but not by the expression "nation," unless we are able to separate

from the term the concept of common territory and political power, is the only communal band we possess, or ever expect to possess, until the great day shall arrive when the Almighty shall see fit, in His inscrutable wisdom, to unite again His scattered servants in one land, and the Torah shall be the guiding principle of a state, an exemplar of the meaning of Divine Revelation and the mission of humanity.

For this future, which is promised us in the glorious predictions of the inspired prophets, whom God raised up for our ancestors, we hope and pray; but actively to accelerate its coming were sin, and is prohibited to us, while the entire purpose of the Messianic age is that we may, in prosperity, exhibit to mankind a better example of "Israel" than did our ancestors the first time, while, hand in hand with us, the entire race will be joined in universal brotherhood through the recognition of God, the All-One.

On account of this purely spiritual nature of the national character of Israel it is capable

of the most intimate union with states, with, perhaps, this difference, that while others seek in the state only the material benefits which it secures, considering possession and enjoyment as the highest good, Israel can only regard it as a means of fulfilling the mission of humanity.

Summon up, I pray you, before your mental vision, the picture of such an Israel, dwelling in freedom in the midst of the nations, and striving to attain unto its ideal, every son of Israel a respected and influential exemplar priest of righteousness and love, disseminating among the nations not specific Judaism, for proselytism is interdicted, but pure humanity. What a mighty impulse to progress, what a luminary and staff in the gloomy days of the Middle Ages had not Israel's sin and the insanity of the nations rendered such a *Galuth* impossible! How impressive, how sublime it would have been, if, in the midst of a race that adored only power, possessions, and enjoyment, and that was oft blinded by superstitious imaginings, there had lived quietly and publicly human beings of a different sort,

who beheld in material possessions only the means of practising justice and love towards all; whose minds, pervaded with the wisdom and truth of the law, maintained simple, straightforward views, and emphasized them for themselves and others in expressive, vivid deed-symbols.

But it would seem as though Israel was to be fitted through the endurance of harsh and cruel exile for the proper appreciation and utilization of its milder and gentler form.

When *Galuth* will be comprehended and accepted as it should be, when in suffering, the service of God and His Torah will be understood as the only task of life, when even in misery God will be served, and external abundance esteemed only as a means of this service, then, perhaps, Israel will be ready for the greater temptations of prosperity and happiness in dispersion. Just as it is our duty to endeavor to obtain those material possessions which are the fundamental condition of life, so also is it the duty of every one to take advantage of every alleviation and improve-

ment of his condition open to him in a righteous way; for, the more means, the more opportunity is given to him to fulfill his mission in its broadest sense; and no less than of the individual is it the duty of the community to obtain for all its members the opportunities and privileges of citizenship and liberty. Do I consider it desirable? I bless emancipation, when I see how the excess of oppression drove Israel away from human intercourse, prevented the cultivation of the mind, limited the free development of the noble sides of character, and compelled many individuals to enter, for the sake of self-support, upon paths which, to be sure men filled with the true spirit of Judaism would have shunned even in the extremest necessity, but the temptation to enter upon which they were too weak to withstand.

I bless emancipation when I notice that no spiritual principle, even such as are born of superstitious self-deception, stands in its way, but only those passions degrading to humanity, lust for gain and narrow selfishness; I rejoice

when I perceive that in this concession of emancipation, regard for the inborn rights of men to live as equals among equals, and the principle that whosoever bears the seal of a child of God, unto whom belongs the earth, shall be willingly acknowledged by all as brother, are freely acknowledged without force or compulsion, but purely through the power of their inner truth and demand, as a natural consequence, the sacrifice of the base passions, love of self and gain. I welcome this sacrifice, wherever it is offered, as the dawn of reviving humanity in mankind, as a preliminary step to the universal recognition of God as the only Lord and Father, of all human beings as the children of the All-One, and consequently brethren, and of the earth as soil common to all, and bestowed upon them by God to be administered in accordance with His will. But for Israel I only bless it if at the same time there awakes in Israel the true spirit, which, independent of emancipation or non-emancipation, strives to fulfill the Israel-mission; to elevate and ennoble ourselves, to

implant the spirit of Judaism in our souls, in order that it may produce a life in which that spirit shall be reflected and realized. I bless it, if Israel does not regard emancipation as the goal of its task, but only as a new condition of its mission, and as a new trial, much severer than the trial of oppression; but I should grieve if Israel understood itself so little, and had so little comprehension of its own spirit that it would welcome emancipation as the end of the Galuth, and the highest goal of its historic mission. If Israel regards this glorious concession merely as a means of securing a greater degree of comfort in life, and greater opportunities for the acquisition of wealth and enjoyments, it would show that Israel had not comprehended the spirit of its own Law, nor learnt aught from the Galuth. But sorrowfully, indeed, would I mourn, if Israel should so far forget itself as to deem emancipation—increased room for the acquisition of gain and pleasure through freedom from unjust oppression—not too dearly purchased through capricious curtailment of the

Torah, capricious abandonment of the chief element of our vitality. We must become Jews, Jews in the true sense of the word, permitting the spirit of the Law to pervade our entire being, accepting it as the fountain of life spiritual and ethical; then will Judaism gladly welcome emancipation as affording a greater opportunity for the fulfillment of its task, the realization of a noble and ideal life.

SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

You are right. The whole question of emancipation, which only concerns our external state, possesses but a subordinate interest for Judaism. Sooner or later the nations will decide what attitude they should take in the issue between right and wrong, between humanity or inhumanity, and the first awakening of a nobler sentiment than the mere lust for possession and enjoyment, the first expression of a livelier appreciation of the universal Lordship and Fatherhood of God, and of the earth as a Holy Land, given by Him to all men for the fulfillment of mankind's task, will speedily take effect in the emancipation of all the oppressed, and, therefore, also in that of the Jews.

Emancipation, like our external state altogether, is a matter, religiously speaking, of secondary consideration. We may, indeed, take part in accelerating its coming, but in itself it makes us neither greater nor smaller.

There is another goal before us, whose attainment depends entirely upon our own efforts; it is the refinement and ennoblement of ourselves, the fulfillment of Judaism by Jews.

This leads to a consideration of the topic which you designate by the term "Reform."

Certainly, dear Benjamin, we are far from being what we should be, and if you compare the life ideal, which the Torah desires us to realize, even according to the scanty outlines which I have drawn for you in these letters, with our actual life as individuals and as a community, you will at once discern how numerous are the steps which we must still make, and how great the distance yet to be climbed before we can reach the glorious summit of our aspiration and our hope. Therefore, may our motto be—Reform; let us strive with all our power, with all the good and noble qualities of our character to reach this height of ideal perfection—Reform.

Its only object, however, must be the fulfillment of Judaism by Jews in our time, fulfillment of the eternal idea in harmony with the

conditions of the time; education, progress to the Torah height, not, however, lowering the Torah to the level of the age, cutting down the towering summit to the sunken grade of our life. We Jews need to be reformed through Judaism, newly comprehended by the spirit and fulfilled with the utmost energy; but merely to seek greater ease and comfort in life through the destruction of the eternal code set up for all ages by the God of Eternity, is not and never can be Reform. Judaism seeks to lift us up to its height, how dare we attempt to drag it down to our level?

Undoubtedly you recognize the evil defect of our time; ignorance or false views of Judaism, combined with a tendency, penetrating from the outer world into our humble habitations, to look upon enjoyment as the chief aim of life.

Alas! how widespread is ignorance, how rare the Jew who knows himself, his purpose in life, and the meaning of his history! Where are the sons of Israel in whose breast echo the tones of the harp of David and the words of

the prophets, and whose mind—but, ah! I should be silent concerning the mind—comprehends the extent of the Israel-duty? And what wrong and mischievous notions exist concerning the principles, ordinances, and teachings of Judaism? Even that which is known externally and superficially, how little is it known as regards its wondrously profound inner meaning! For instance, the Edoth duties, so useful and indispensable through the lessons they teach, are looked upon by some as mere mechanical *opus operatum*, or as talismanic jugglery for the prevention of physical evils or the erection of mystic supra-mundane worlds. Others again look upon the holiest laws of righteousness as matters outside of Judaism, not, as they should regard them, indissolubly interwoven with its very fabric.

As for those highly important laws of Judaism, which strengthen us to do battle with the sensual lusts of appetite and passion, of indulgence and ease, how little are they understood, how often denounced as cruel privation

beyond the power of human nature to endure; how can they otherwise than succumb in this unequal combat, since their victory is gained by the spirit, and that is either absent or woefully deficient? This inner conception is lacking, comprehension of Judaism, of the significance of its historic mission and teachings, and, therefore, love for it has no soil upon which to grow. How extreme the resultant danger is can be conceived when we consider that this love is our only counterbalance against internal and external temptation, and the attainment of this love our aim and our only salvation. Compare with this view the tendencies of contemporary Reform. Be wroth with none, respect all, for they all feel the shortcomings which exist, all wish that which is good, as they conceive it; all desire sincerely the welfare of Israel, and if they have failed to recognize the good and have erred in their comprehension of the truth, not they are chiefly to blame; the entire past bears the responsibility together with them. You should, therefore, respect their intentions, but you

may well mourn and weep when you examine the aims to which their efforts are directed. Is that the Reform we need, to take a standpoint outside of Judaism, to accept a conception derived from strangers, of the purposes of human life, and the object of liberty, and then, in correspondence with this borrowed notion, to cut, curtail, and obliterate the tenets and ordinances of Judaism? Is that the Reform we desire, to remain within Judaism, uncomprehended Judaism, and to confine one's effort to modifying the external form of an uncomprehended part of Judaism, the service, in accordance with the demands of an age, abounding in hollow sentimentality, but sadly deficient in sound reflection and thought, substituting for things misunderstood and abolished other things equally uncomprehended; nothing instituted or originated to emphasize or perpetuate any true inner sentiment of our faith? And as for the religious education of the young, which should be the bearer of all our hopes for the future, how is it situated?

Education, indeed, is not lacking; our youth are made thoroughly capable of contending vigorously in the struggle for bread; handiwork, commerce, art, science—all these are carefully inculcated and the mind developed, although even in this regard more attention is paid to the mere strengthening of the memory than to the cultivation of habits of thought; but the culture of the heart, the inculcation of Judaism, its emphatic presentation by the school resulting in its consequent infiltration through life, the rearing of human beings who will comprehend themselves as beings living in a Divine world and endowed with Divine powers, which they shall dedicate to the fulfillment of the Divine will; human beings who shall rejoice in their mission and be filled with fiery love for the name "Jew," which summons them to such a life, to fulfill the Divine law amidst perils, sufferings, and privations; human beings who comprehend the world, the past and the present and themselves as corner-stones in the edifice of the future—if we seek such, we find a vacuum.

Take one of the religious books in your hand and what will you find, a life-principle drawn from outside of Judaism, the thirteen creeds upon which Judaism perhaps stands, but of which it is not composed, and a few moral principles deduced from the Ten Commandments, the Chukkim and Edoth not mentioned, or but slightly, as the so-called ceremonial law in the appendix. It is all more or less the reflection of catechisms, originated upon a different domain, for totally different purposes. Among those, again, who do not use these catechisms we find taught the merest word-knowledge of the Torah, sometimes not even that; and as for the duties, they are merely taught for practice, in the most superficial manner, but without the slightest elucidation or spiritual fervor, to insure their comprehension and retention in life. Whence, in Heaven's name, shall Jews come, Jews inspired with the living spirit of the knowledge of God and their mission, and girded with strength to do battle against sensuality and error, against the troubles and

sorrows of time? You see—but why continue the gloomy picture? Let us rejoice that at least Israel's youth is not inferior to others in intellect and morality, even though far removed from the ideals of Judaism. Let us rejoice at the activity within Judaism, even though much of it is but destruction or the painting over of rotten parts. This is the pledge of a better time. Let us try to outline the methods for obtaining a desirable reconstruction and a reform which appears to us true.

EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

The very essence of Israel's being rests upon the Torah; in it is our basis and our goal, from it the vital fluid in our veins. If our relation to it, the law of life and truth, be healthy and normal, Israel can suffer no ill; if sick, Israel cannot be well. There is no evil, no wrongful development in Judaism which does not owe its origin to an improper or sinful comprehension of the Torah, or at least is perpetuated thereby. Our sages with profound insight point to this as the true cause of the first national downfall, **יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּרְכוּ**, בתורה תחלה, that they did not study the Law with the firm resolve to fulfill it in life and for life; life, the practical daily life of the world, fled from the Law, and the Law could not therefore properly pervade life, could not adequately enlighten it and inspire it with its, the Law's, own genial warmth.

If you search for the cause of our modern

sickness, you will find it nowhere else than in this fatal misconception and misapprehension. Originally only the fundamental teachings of Israel's Law were fixed in written form, the so-called written Law, ת"ש"נ"כ, but the broader application thereof, in particular the spirit, which is the life, was to be preserved only in the living word, the so-called oral law, ת"ש"נ"פ. The oppressions and afflictions of the times and the dispersion of Israel threatened destruction to the traditional science; the great and holy men who stood at the nation's head, yielding to necessity, decreed that the Mishnah be written down as far as its mere external word was conceived, but its spirit was still left to the traditional exposition of the living word. Increased external sorrows demanded more; they put into writing the spirit of the Mishnah in the Gemara, but the spirit of the Gemara was still reserved for oral interpretation. The affliction increased, making further safeguards necessary; they put the spirit of Bible and Gemara into the Aggadoth or allegorical in-

terpretations, but disguised and veiled so that personal research should still be required to discover the true spirit of the traditional teachings thus perpetuated.

In two academies¹ the Law and the spirit sought refuge, but passion and error soon sapped the foundations of these noble institutions and destroyed them; the Law went into exile, the letter and its external practical fulfillment were saved, but the spirit, preserved only in the symbolical concealment of the letter, disappeared. The spirit could only be comprehended by deduction from the letter and the veiling symbol, together with the higher insight which individuals had preserved. In that dark time there were not lacking individuals who shone forth conspicuous through the true understanding of the spirit of Judaism which they possessed, but they were the exceptions; not all were endowed with such mental elevation.

Israel's youth, as a rule, trained their minds in non-Jewish schools, in independent, philo-

¹ Sura and Pumbeditha.

sophic studies, and drew from Arabic sources the concepts of the Greek philosophy. As the highest purpose of human existence they learned to consider self-perfection through the knowledge of truth. Their awakened minds felt themselves in contradiction to Judaism, whose spirit they did not comprehend; their life-view was opposed to a view of life which lays chiefest stress upon the deed, upon action, and looks upon knowledge only as a means to such action. The age gave birth to a man,¹ a mind, who, the product of uncomprehended Judaism and Arabic science, was obliged to reconcile the strife which raged in his own breast in his own manner, and who, by proclaiming it to the world, became the guide of all in whom the same conflict existed.

This great man, to whom, and to whom alone, we owe the preservation of practical Judaism to our time, is responsible, because he sought to reconcile Judaism with the difficulties which confronted it from without, instead of developing it creatively from within, for all

¹ Maimonides.

the good and the evil which bless and afflict the heritage of the father. His peculiar mental tendency was Arabic-Greek, and his conception of the purpose of life the same. He entered into Judaism from without, bringing with him opinions of whose truth he had convinced himself from extraneous sources and—he reconciled. For him, too, self-perfecting through the knowledge of truth was the highest aim, the practical he deemed subordinate. For him knowledge of God was the end, not the means; hence he devoted his intellectual powers to speculations upon the essence of Deity, and sought to bind Judaism to the results of his speculative investigations as to postulates of science or faith. The Mizvoth became for him merely ladders, necessary only to conduct to knowledge or to protect against error, this latter often only the temporary and limited error of polytheism. Mishpatim became only rules of prudence, Mitzvoth as well; Chukkim rules of health, teaching right feeling, defending against the transitory errors of the time; Edoth ordinances, designed to

promote philosophical or other concepts; all this having no foundation in the eternal essence of things, not resulting from their eternal demand on me, or from my eternal purpose and task, no eternal symbolizing of an unchangeable idea, and not inclusive enough to form a basis for the totality of the commandments.

He, the great systematic orderer of the practical results of the Talmud, gives expression in the last part of his philosophic work to opinions concerning the meaning and purpose of the commandments which, taking the very practical results codified by himself as the contents of the commandments, are utterly untenable—cast no real light upon them, and cannot go hand in hand with them in practice, in life, and in science. These are the views which have been inherited up to the present day by those who care at all to understand the spirit of the Mitzvoth. But since the precepts, as practically fulfilled, stand entirely out of connection with these explanations, it was inevitable that their ceremonial fulfillment lost its

spiritual basis, and became despised. You see, instead of taking one's stand within Judaism, and asking, "Inasmuch as Judaism makes these demands of me, what opinion of the purpose of man must it have?" instead of comprehending each demand in its totality according to Bible and Talmud, and then asking, "What is the reason and idea of this injunction?" people set up their standpoints outside of Judaism, and sought to draw it over to them; they conceived *a priori* opinions as to what the Mitzvoth might be, without disturbing themselves as to the real appearance of the Mitzvoth in all its parts. What was the consequence? After these opinions had brought about the natural phenomenon that men who believed themselves the possessors of the knowledge which the commandments were designed to inculcate, thought themselves absolved both from the fulfillment of the commandment, intended only as a guide, and from the study of the science of the commandments, which had lost for them all intellectual significance; other men, possessed of a deeper comprehension of

Judaism, became at first enemies of this philosophical spirit, and later, of all specifically intellectual and philosophical pursuits in general. Certain misunderstood utterances¹ were taken as weapons with which to repel all higher intellectual interpretation of the Talmud; no distinction was made between the question, "What is stated here?" and the question, "Why is it stated?" and not even the category of *Edoth*, which, according to its whole nature, was designed to stir the mind to activity, was excluded from the excommunication of the intellectual. Another misunderstood passage, (סנהדרין כ"ד א תוס" ד"ה), (בלולה), even led later to the suppression of Bible study, an error against which Prophecy expressly warns (מס" סופרים פ טו) (ה"ל"ט). The inevitable consequence was, therefore, that since oppression and persecu-

¹ For instance, ב"ר לר לר, מ"ד, ת"כ א"מ, ו"ט. The injunction not to דרשינן טעמא דקרא, which was often held up to me, has no other than the very proper meaning that we should not attach any importance in practical decision to the conjectural reason of a Mitzvah, because it is only conjecture.

See also קדושים, ו"ט, ו"ט, רמ"ב to the Torah.

tion had robbed Israel of every broad and natural view of the world and of life, and the Talmud had yielded about all the practical results for life of which it was capable, every mind that felt the desire of independent activity was obliged to forsake the paths of study and research in general open to the human intellect, and to take its recourse to dialectic subtleties and hair-splittings. Only a very few during this entire period stood with their intellectual efforts entirely within Judaism, and built it up out of its own inner concepts. Most distinguished among them are the author of the "Cuzari," and the son of Nachman. This condition of uncomprehended Judaism became particularly prevalent in Germany, where ages of persecution and oppression suppressed every freer upward movement of the mind. The general fundamental principle, God the All-One and the Torah His will, and the fulfillment of the Law in the fear of God and with love for, and faith in Him, retained, however, everywhere its living force; and life, with all its posses-

sions and all its pleasures, was offered with magnificent devotion as a willing sacrifice to it. A form of learning came into existence, concerning which, as a layman, I do not venture to express a judgment, but which, if I comprehend aright the little that I know, is an invaluable repository of the spirit of Bible and Talmud, but which has been, unfortunately, misunderstood; and what should have been eternal, progressive development, was considered a stationary mechanism, and the inner significance and concept thereof as extramundane dream-worlds. This learning came into existence, and the mind turned either to the external ingenious development of the Talmud, or to this learning, which appealed to the emotions as well. Practical Judaism, which, comprehended in its purity, would perhaps have been impregnated with the spiritual became in it, through misconception, a magical mechanism, a means of influencing or resisting theosophic worlds and anti-worlds.

Little by little there came into the hands of the people a part of a work, originally intended

only as a compendium for the learned and containing the last results of Talmudic legal science, codified for ceremonial practice. It was essentially nothing but a differently arranged edition of the systematic work of Maimonides, by which this latter had become the great preserver of practical Judaism in the times of the greatest Galuth-oppression. Unfortunately, however, it was almost exclusively one part of this work which came into the hands of people, containing only the divisions *Edoth* and *Abodah*, referring to worship and holy days; the other parts, which treat of the other duties, were left for the learned, and did not become the possession of the people. Gradually the unfortunate opinion developed that Judaism meant nothing but praying and keeping holy days; its significance for life in general remained unrecognized.

Considering all these influences together, you will be able to comprehend the appearance which Judaism presented, say, eighty years ago. The subsequent events will also be intelligible to you. When the external yoke

began to grow lighter, and the spirit felt itself freer, then arose a brilliant, respect-inspiring personality, Mendelssohn, which by its commanding influence has led the later development up to this day. This commanding individual, who had not drawn his mental development from Judaism, who was great chiefly in philosophical disciplines, in metaphysics, and æsthetics, who treated the Bible only philologically and æsthetically, and did not build up Judaism as a science from itself, but merely defended it against political stupidity and pietistic Christian audacity, and who was personally an observant Jew, accomplished this much, that he showed the world and his brethren that it was possible to be a strictly religious Jew and yet to shine distinguished as the German Plato.¹

¹ Do not misunderstand me. I speak here only of the total impression of his work for Judaism. His "Jerusalem," which defends, on Jewish grounds, liberty of thought and faith, emphasizes also, in contradistinction to the Moreh, the practical essence of Judaism, and gives utterance to an opinion concerning the Edoth, which, had it been carried out and intellectually comprehended by his successors, might have revolutionized the subsequent period. But neither the one thing nor the other

This "and yet" was decisive. His followers contented themselves with developing Bible study in the philologic-æsthetic sense, with studying the Moreh, and with pursuing and spreading humanistic letters; but Judaism, Bible and Talmud as Jewish science, were neglected. Even the most zealous study of the Bible was of no avail for the comprehension of Judaism, because it was not treated as the authoritative source of doctrine and instruction, but only as a beautiful poetic storehouse from which to draw rich supplies for the fancy and the imagination. The Talmud thus neglected, practical Judaism thus completely uncomprehended, it was but natural that the former symbolizing and abstract interpretation of Judaism, which had for a time been interrupted, again became prevalent, and was carried to an extreme which threatened to

took place. The science of Judaism was not further developed by him, and his successors, lacking the religious sentiment of the Master, did not rest content under the idea of the eternally binding power of Divine revelation, and could do nothing better for the intellectual comprehension of the Law, than to surrender completely to the Maimonidean theories.

destroy all Judaism. If that view of life be true, which places the highest mission of man in the recognition of truth; and who could venture to doubt it, seeing that Maimonides has declared so; above all, if those views concerning the requirements of the Torah be true; and who could dare to think otherwise, since Maimonides, the great authority on Talmud, and himself an observant Jew, had propounded them; then, indeed, the many-foliod Talmud is nothing but a wearisome mass of hair-splitting subtleties, useful only for the accumulation of dust and moths; then, indeed, is practical Judaism nothing but unreasoning weariness of the flesh: who could resist this conclusion?

If, for instance, the sole purpose of the prohibition of labor on the Sabbath was to enable men to rest and recover from the toils of the week, if the Sabbath means only the cessation of corporeal activity in order that the mind may be active; and who could doubt it, since both Moses interpret it thus, and the Christian Sunday agrees with their conception,

who must not consider it mere pettiness and pedantic absurdity to fill an entire folio with the investigation of the question, what particular actions are forbidden, and what permitted on the Sabbath day? How singular, to declare the writing of two letters, perhaps an intellectual occupation, a deadly sin, while judging leniently many acts involving great physical exertion, and freeing from penalty all purposeless destruction! Why, it even forbids the hen to lay eggs! Or, to go over to another domain, if sacrifice means only to give of one's possessions in grateful recognition that they come from God, or if, in its special Biblical form, it was mainly designed as a protest against the polytheistic sacrificial usages then prevailing; how absurd it is, to fill three or four folios with investigations concerning the manner of offering sacrifice, the part which might be used, the persons who might officiate, and the permissible times! Do you not see, that all this is only mind-destroying priest-craft? Therefore; therefore—many conclusions could be and were drawn, but before

drawing them, people should have asked themselves, "Is Moses the son of Maimon, or Moses the son of Mendel, really identical with Moses the son of Amram?" Is there not contained in this dissonance between the theory of the Mitzvah and its reality a proof that the explanation is not right, that it is not based upon the complete conception of the Mitzvah, but is—dreamed into it from without?

Does not the Moreh itself say that in forming the concept of the Mitzvoth it uses the written Law only as the basis, a standpoint which Maimonides himself would have declared incorrect for the practical fulfillment, and which cannot, therefore, be considered aught else than irrational?

Does he not himself say that in considering the significance of the Mitzvoth he has overlooked those details which, in their totality, give the complete idea of the Mitzvoth, and which form the main subjects of discussion in the Oral Law? (Moreh Nebuchim, Chapters XXVI and XLI.) There must be sense in all the commandments, in particular as regards

those which announce themselves as instructive, which call themselves Testimony, Memorial, Symbol. It must be possible to find the indwelling spirit of these; how would it be to try to do so, to make once the experiment? This attempt has hitherto never been made. Many did not wish to make the attempt nor to attain to the result. A spirit had come from the West, which mocked at everything holy, and knew no greater pleasure than to make them ridiculous, and together with it there entered a longing for sensual enjoyments, which eagerly embraced the opportunity to rid itself so easily of burdensome restrictions. These motives combined to induce people to tear down the barriers erected by the Law, until human conduct became one dead, dull level.¹

¹ A word here concerning the true method of Torah-investigation. Two revelations are open before us, nature—and Torah. In nature all phenomena stand before us as indisputable facts, and we can only endeavor *a posteriori* to ascertain the law of each and the connection of all. Abstract demonstration of the truth or, rather, the probability of theoretic explanations of the facts of nature, is an unnatural proceeding. The right method is to verify our assumptions by the known facts, and the highest attainable degree of certainty is to say, "The facts

And what is our present state? The first delights of the worldly spirit have passed away, other generations have succeeded to

agree with our assumption"—that is, all observed phenomena can be explained according to our theory. A singly contradictory phenomenon will make our theory untenable. We must, therefore, acquire all possible knowledge concerning the object of our investigation, and know it, if possible, in its totality. If, however, all efforts should fail in disclosing the inner law and connection of phenomena revealed to us as facts in nature, the facts remain, nevertheless, undeniable, and cannot be reasoned away. The same principles must be applied to the investigation of the Torah. In the Torah, as in nature, God is the ultimate cause; in the Torah, as in nature, no fact may be denied, even though the reason and the connection may not be comprehended; as in nature, so in the Torah, the traces of Divine wisdom must ever be sought for. Its ordinances must be accepted in their entirety as undeniable phenomena, and must be studied in accordance to their connection with each other, and the subject to which they relate. Our conjectures must be tested by their precepts, and our highest certainty here also can only be that everything stands in harmony with our theory. But as in nature, the phenomena are recognized as facts, though their cause and relation to each other may not be understood, [and are independent of our investigation], but rather the contrary is the case; in the same way the ordinances of the Torah must be law for us, even if we do not comprehend the reason and the purpose of a single one. Our fulfillment of the commandments must not depend upon our investigations. Only the commandments belonging to the category Edoth, which are designed to impress the intellectual and emotional life, are incomplete without such research.

read: "and
they are not
dependent upon
our investigation"

those who witnessed the first change in Jewish sentiment, and to-day two diametrically opposite parties confront each other. The one party has inherited uncomprehended Judaism as a mechanical habit, מצות אנשים מלומדה, without its spirit; they bear it in their hands as a sacred relic, a revered mummy, and fear to rouse its spirit. The others are partly filled with noble enthusiasm for the welfare of the Jews, but look upon Judaism as a lifeless framework, as something which should be laid in the grave of a long since dead and buried past. They seek its spirit and find it not, and are in danger, with all their efforts to help the Jew, of severing the last life-nerve of Judaism—ignorantly. And to-day, when, despite a thousand shades and variations of difference, these two opposing elements agree in the one great circumstance, that they are both wrong—what shall be done? What is the way to salvation? Does it suffice for the salvation of Judaism to establish our schools upon such a two-fold basis, and to reform our form of worship? The spirit, the inner harmonious life-

principle, is lacking, and that you cannot supply through polishing the outside frame.

There is one way to salvation;—where the sin was committed the atonement must begin, —and this one way is, to forget the inherited prejudices and opinions concerning Judaism; to go back to the sources of Judaism, to Bible, Talmud, and Midrash; to read, study, and comprehend them in order to live them; to draw from them the teachings of Judaism concerning God, the world, mankind, and Israel, according to history and precept; to know Judaism out of itself; to learn from its own utterances its science of life. With the Bible the beginning should be made, its language should first be comprehended, and then out of the spirit of the speech the spirit of the speakers should be inferred. The Bible should not be studied as an interesting object of philological or antiquarian research, not as basis for theories of taste or for amusement; it should be studied as the foundation of a new science; with Davidic sentiment nature should be contemplated; with the ear of an Isaiah history

should be listened to, and then, with eye thus aroused, with ear thus opened, the doctrine of God, world, man, Israel, and Torah should be drawn from the Bible, and should become an idea, or system of ideas, fully comprehended. In this spirit Talmud should be studied, in the Halachah only further elucidation and amplification of ideas already known from the Bible should be sought for; in the Aggadah only figuratively disguised manifestation of the same spirit. This path you should pursue, unconcerned as to the opinion which the one or the other school of misled ones may hold in reference to your methods of study; unconcerned that your simplicity of interpretation will not permit you to shine among the heroes of hair-splitting, life-ignoring disputations; unconcerned if you do not shine in the special disciplines which you use only as auxiliary sciences for your general object; unconcerned if you are no longer qualified for pretentious appearance. All this should concern you little, for you are learning what is better, to know the light, the truth, the warmth, and

the sublimity of life, and when you have attained to this you will comprehend Israel's history and Israel's Law, and that life, in its true sense, is the reflection of that Law, permeated with that spirit. One spirit lives in all, from the construction of the Holy Tongue to the construction of the universe and the plan of life, one spirit, the spirit of the All-One! That would be a task for the disciples of science! But the results of that science must be carried over into life, transplanted by schools. Schools for Jews! The young saplings of your people should be reared as Jews, trained to become sons and daughters of Judaism, as you have recognized and comprehended and learned to respect and love it as the law of your life. The language of the Bible and the language of the land should be theirs; in both they should be taught to think; their heart should be taught to feel, their mind to think; the Scriptures should be their book of law for life, and they should be able to comprehend life through their word.

Their eye should be open to recognize the

world around them as God's world and themselves in God's world as His servants; their ear should be open to perceive in history the narrative of the education of *all* men to this service. The wise precepts of Torah and Talmud should be made clear to them as designed to spiritualize their lives for such sublime service of God, and they should be taught to comprehend, respect, and love them, in order that they might rejoice in the name "Jew" despite all which that name implies of scorn and privation. Together with this instruction they should be fitted for bread-winning, but they should be taught that bread-winning is only a means, not the purpose of life, and that the value of life is not to be judged according to rank, wealth, or splendor, but according to the amount of good and of service to God with which it is filled. They should be taught not to subordinate the demands of their spiritual mission to those of sensuality and comfort, but the reverse, and while this training was going on, and until Israel's houses were built up of such sons and

daughters, the parents should be implored and entreated not to destroy the work of the school, not to crush or choke with icy and unsympathetic mood the tender shoots of Jewish sentiment in the breasts of their children. The latent germs of a nobler disposition in the breast of parents should also be stirred, and if this be impossible, at least they should be forced to respect the sentiments they could not comprehend nor share. If these ends should be earnestly striven for, it would be different in Israel.

It will be different in Israel; our time leads necessarily to such a change. Do not think our time so dark and hopeless, friend; it is only nervous and uncertain, as a woman in childbirth. But better the anxiety which prevails in the house of a woman about to give birth, than the freedom from anxiety, but also from joy and hope, in the house of the barren one. This time of labor may outlast our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren, but our later posterity will rejoice in the child that has struggled out into light and life, and

its name will be "self-comprehending Judaism."

The age offers one pledge for the accomplishment of this result; it is the effort to think, to comprehend and to grasp with the mind that which should be respected and revered. Truly, when the mind will have realized the futility of this baseless and aimless striving, of its bargaining with the overestimated demands of the fleeting moment; when it will have clearly brought to its consciousness that the noble life can only be erected upon ideas inwardly recognized as true, then will arise the question, "What does it mean that I am a Jew? What is Judaism?" Nor will the answer to this question be sought at the cathedras or in the writings of non-Jewish scholars, who often see Judaism through a distorting glass and who sometimes think it necessary to destroy the teachings of Torah and Judaism in order to establish their own notions. Neither will it be sought in the writings of time-serving reformers influenced by external motives, nor in the writings of

Jewish scholars who take their standpoint outside of Judaism. But the seekers after knowledge will go back to the ancient fountains of Judaism, Bible and Talmud, and the one effort will be to obtain the concept of life out of Judaism and to comprehend Judaism as the law of life, and this effort will lead to the transposing of that which holds the theory of truth and life into actual, practical truth and life, in accordance with the old adage, now, alas, nearly forgotten, ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות, "to learn and to teach, to keep and to do."

O, that you all, who mean well with Judaism, which you have inherited as a habit, and which you are thinking of handing down as a habit, O, that your eyes might be opened and that you might recognize that only through the spirit can you hand it down ; O, that you might at least hand to your sons and daughters the Holy Writings, the writings of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, so that the spirit which throbs in them might become their light and support in life ; O, that you noble-minded ones, who think that you labor

for the weal of Judaism; O, that you might consider that when you strike the chains from hand and foot or don fine clothing and adorn your outward persons, you do not yet help to improve or elevate life. Lower again the hand upraised to strike down the battlements of your faith, and consider whether you are not about to destroy an edifice which, even though in its covering of the dust of centuries, it appears to you worthy only of the axe's stroke, may yet contain things holy and eternal, things of life and truth; turn again toward it your averted gaze and examine what it is from which you turn away. Is it the fault of the object—should the object be held blameworthy, if those who represent it, themselves covered with the dust of the battlefield upon which they struggle against oppression and misery, could only rescue it dust-covered and made repulsive? Should we, to whom the mildness of the times has given the task of rubbing off the dust, think so little of the troubles and battles of those men as not even to deem it worth while to dust off the jewel for our own benefit, but,

regarding only the dust-covered exterior, cast away as worthless the precious possession for which our ancestors sacrificed life, and property, and liberty, and all the joys of life? Should—but I forget, my dear Benjamin, that only heaven hears these wishes, that only this paper sees them, and that only to you will they be shown; I forget that I am writing only to you. Light and truth and life will emerge from this time of trial; be sure of that, friend, and then you will regard differently that which I was accustomed to lament with you, the apparently chaotic condition of the spiritual affairs of our people; no government, no authority, all efforts solely individual, and, through the lust for reform, the religious service, about which the whole movement turns, has become so variegated that a Jew, travelling through Germany, might almost find it different in every congregation. Do you not see that this also may have its good? I am convinced that none of those of us now living comprehend Judaism in its true purity and truth. Consider also the divergency of

opinions, quite natural inasmuch as almost every Rabbi strikes out his own path and is led by no schools. Consider furthermore that we are only in the time of labor; it would be unfortunate if an authority tried to establish something—it would only make our sorrows eternal! It would be impossible to select proper men. If one-sided, they would perpetuate extravagances; if composed of mingled elements representing various ideas, their creation would be a half-thing, a torso, and would only serve to dam the stream of development, which can only bring pure and living water when permitted to flow to its uttermost end. Time, if left unhindered, will wash away what it itself has brought into existence, and room will always remain for the higher edifice which yet awaits us. I think that if, in the period after Maimonides, anxiety for the maintenance of Judaism in external practice had not made it necessary to suppress antagonistic efforts, centuries ago the improper tendencies of the Jewish spirit would, through the very completeness of their fulfillment, have brought

about sober reflection upon the nature and purposes of our faith, and we would now be whither we can only expect to come in centuries. Under present conditions I rejoice that the scales hang free, held by God alone, and that only intellectual efforts mutually balance each other, but that no temporal power can interpose the sword to check the freedom of the swinging. If it should be stopped, our great grandchildren would be no better off than we. Should we fear to go through the period of anxiety for them?

Let the scales swing! The freer they hang, and the more violently now they swing up and down, the truer and purer will be the estimate of the right principle of faith and life which they will finally fix. And when the scales have ceased to swing, and when all luminous will stand in Israel, the Spirit of Understanding, רוח בִּינָה, the spirit which understands itself, its history, and its law, when its throbbing impulse of life will have pervaded all its members; when the branch gone forth from Israel shall have performed its mission and

fought to victory a battle of another kind in the midst of our non-Jewish brethren; when the free gaze uplifted to the All-One, and the consciousness of inner moral power shall have conquered whatever dims the eye and corrupts noble vigor . . . then will the book of our history have been written, and its final teachings will have penetrated all spirits. Let us comprehend our time, dear Benjamin, and let every one, according to the measure of intellectual and spiritual power vouchsafed him, strive to further the progress to the goal, each in the greater or smaller circle in which he lives. Thousands may forsake the cause of life and light, thousands may tear themselves away from the lot and the name of Israel, whose mode of life they have long since rejected—the cause of truth counts not the number of its adherents. If only one remains—one Jew with the book of the law in his hand, with Israel's law in his heart, Israel's light in his spirit—that one suffices; Israel's cause is not lost. When Israel had grown **unfit** for its mission, the All-One desired to

permit the law and the mission of Israel to be borne by the one Moses, and the prophet tells us timid ones the same truth:

“Gaze upon the rock from which we were hewn,

Upon the fountain-hollowing mallet with which ye were dug!

Gaze upon Abraham, your father,

Upon Sarah, destined to bear ye.

One only was he when I called him;

I blessed him and made him many.”

Farewell, dear Benjamin, train yourself to be such a one; farewell.

NINETEENTH LETTER.

You have prevailed, my Benjamin! On the day when you consecrate unto yourself the wife, with whose aid you are to erect a house in Israel, I shall offer you the only present you seek; I shall grant the request which you have so often uttered to me. I shall, if God gives me understanding and health, lay upon my people's altar the only offering which, in my weakness, I am able to place thereon. I do not entertain in connection with it the sanguine hopes with which you have welcomed this resolve. I have revealed to you in writing and orally what I have cherished for a long time as my dearest treasure, and you have accepted it with warm appreciation as truth; but I do not imagine on that account that it will be acknowledged by all as truth, or that I may deem it with certainty the pure gold of truth. I know too well both my own limitations and the character of the age to be

led astray by such roseate hopes. But I consider it the duty of every one, in a time of such solemn import, and in behalf of a cause which is to us the holiest and most sacred, to make known his opinions openly and honestly. And if I should only succeed in demonstrating that the matter has not been thoroughly investigated in all its aspects, that there is, perhaps, a way by means of which one could reach entirely different results than those hitherto attained, a view in the light of which everything would present an appearance quite different from that hitherto customary and usual; yes, if I should only succeed in staying one hand that had been too swiftly raised in order to tear down, and could induce its owner instead calmly to examine; indeed, if I could come no nearer to the goal that I have often pictured to you in letters than to induce another to step upon the road which I have prepared, another, more talented, more richly equipped with intellectual light and strength than I, and he should demonstrate so clearly the truth and dignity, the life and the light

contained in the edifice of Judaism that my feeble attempts would arouse but a pitying smile and be forgotten; friend, my reward would even then be greater than I have dared to hope. Nor do you err when you think that modest diffidence has restrained me so long from undertaking a task which must long since have spoken within me.

That I have long since devoted my thoughts to this task, the accompanying roll of essays concerning Israel and Israel's duties—or rather concerning the duties alone, for my thoughts on Israel are still only a project of my mind—must convince you. But I have been, and still am, diffident, not on account of myself, but on account of the cause which I have ventured to represent.

In an age when the contrasts stand so sharply over against each other, and when truth is on neither side, in such an age the man who belongs to no party, who has only the cause in his heart, and serves it alone, cannot, unless he be a Divine master, who comprehends the Divine truth in its purity, and has the power

to show it so brilliant in its Divine radiance that all spirits subdued acknowledge its divinity and do it homage, such a one cannot, I repeat, expect approval or agreement on any side.

This I knew and know, and with this knowledge within my mind I first took up the pen to these essays. Fame or acknowledgment of my personal merit are not the objects which I seek, or else they indeed would have been right whose judgment already sounds in my ears as that of the multitude: "He understands but ill the world and his time, and what it demands." No such motive has prompted me to these efforts, but only the inner voice which, though I listen and examine my inmost thoughts a thousand times, speaks ever to me the same words, saying: "There is some truth in your views, some of that truth which, you think, must ultimately struggle forth into the light of victory; the way upon which you have begun to walk is perhaps only a by-path, but it leads in the right direction, and if one abler than you should begin to pursue it, the cause of truth would surely prevail." This

voice alone stirred me on. Surely, friend, a grain of truth is worth the sacrifice of my person, even if I should sacrifice it a thousand times. This care has never made me hesitate, but other cares have filled me with anxiety, when I asked myself whether I would not do harm where I thought to help. The view of the reconstruction of Judaism as a science I have evolved almost alone out of my inner consciousness. Only one dear friend assisted me a little in the smaller, easier, and clearer part, and only one star guided me somewhat in the beginning. I have worked myself through to the point where you found me. But may it not be that upon this way, where at every step thorns and refuse had to be removed, and I, with my limited powers, was called upon alone to take issue with the entire past and the entire present, may it not well be, I ask, that I have entered into a thousand devious paths, and accepted a thousand errors as truths? Is the edifice, as it stands within me, and as I would show it to my brethren, is it free from defects? And if the attempt

should fail, would not those who would like to erase from the book of life the cause for which I live, would they not make use of my unsuccessful attempts as a means of strangling the dearly beloved cause? How they would gloat over my failure and say, "See there, some new attempts to rehabilitate Judaism—entire failures!" I am not constituted for a writer; all my life I have thought more than spoken, spoken more than written; will I be able to write for truth with the clearness which convinces the mind, the power which captures the heart? I must, if I would speak to the children of the time, address them in German (*i. e.* modern) language and German writing, and as surely as I know that Judaism, rightly comprehended and rightly presented, unites all creatures with a band of love and justice, so surely do I also know that evil disposed calumniators can and do take isolated passages, torn out of their connection, interpreted in contradiction to their true spirit, and without consideration of the entire edifice of which they form but an insignificant part, and use

them as pointed arrows and ponderous cudgels with which to smite and wound helpless victims. Will my efforts have a better fate? Will not some one whose sensitive spirit has been insulted and offended by rude audacity, be able to point to me as the—even though innocent—cause? Many other cares of a similar kind oppressed me.

“How did you answer all these questions,” I hear you ask, “since after all you did resolve to undertake the work?” “Because,” I thought, “I have climbed alone to a height, from which a new view displays itself to me. On that very account it devolves on me to summon companions, to descend and to begin again the journey with the friends who will join me. I only wish to give what I have until now been able to gather together, not as a perfect work, but truly ‘as essays.’” Can it injure the cause in the eyes of the sensible if a single immature youth has, perhaps, dreamed dreams that are utterly baseless and unreal? Then there is the question of duty. I see a child enveloped in flames; the bystand-

ers are timidly inactive, or seek only to save the building. I see the child,—I rush in;—need I ask first my neighbor whether he, too, sees the child; have I the right to consider whether, in my hasty rush, I may not knock some neighbor bloody; may I even ask whether, in my haste to save the child, I am not hindering the task of saving the building or producing a draught, which may start the fire to fresh activity? “But suppose you see the child too late, and before you reach it the building falls with hiss and crash upon its poor head?”

Even if it should bury me, too, in its ruins, I would but have done my duty.

Of course, my dear Benjamin, the natural way would have been to have labored first only for the scientific evolvment, and whatever would have demonstrated in the battle of minds its truth and tenability would have been afterwards quietly transferred into the practice of life. That would have been the quieter, the surer, the pleasanter way.

But our time demands a different course. In Mendelssohn's days, when the new move-

ment of the spirit had begun but the Jewish life was yet untouched, then it would have been possible to construct the science of Judaism, and to bring to the strong formal life the light and warmth of the spirit, and our condition would be different now. To-day it is no longer possible. The opinions, not derived from true Judaism, have become active and vigorous, and labor with hostile energy to undermine that which they pretend to represent. They must be combatted directly in the midst of life, so that many who still observe may comprehend what they observe; that many who reject may hesitate and examine that which they reject; that many a hand, now raised, perhaps, in honest zeal to tear down or to build up something new, be held back, and its owner be induced to inquire carefully concerning that which he had purposed to tear down or to build in other form, and with new additions. Later it would devolve upon the men of science to establish in science, and as science, the principles which we had actively defended in life. That is the way in

which I intend to proceed. If Heaven will vouchsafe me health and understanding, I shall endeavor to declare in a first part the views on Judaism concerning God, the world, man, Israel, the Torah; in a second part to expound the Mitzvoth, as far as it is incumbent upon us, deprived of our national soil, to fulfill them; the passages of the Torah shall always precede; then shall follow the views concerning them with which the study of several years have furnished me, and then, for the purpose of practical fulfillment, extracts from the four-fold code, the Shulchan Aruch, shall follow. Everything shall be treated popularly, directly for life, and its demonstration in Jewish science shall be left as a later task, as you now have this part in your hands. I rejoice that the first impulse to these essays was derived from the necessity of supplying the teachers of the schools under my supervision with a book in which they could read themselves into Jews before they began to rear young souls for Judaism; and in elaborating them for larger circles of readers, I always thought of the intellectual

youths and maidens of my people as their chief readers. This second part I intend—God willing—to publish first. To be sure you are right, in your description of the plan, that the knowledge of the general should precede that of the particular, and such is, indeed, the plan of my work. Nevertheless I shall publish the particular first. I know well that I will thereby rouse up more opponents, for people are readier to acknowledge principles before they have obtained a full view of the consequences to which they logically lead. Still I cannot do otherwise.

I recognize as our nearest and most fundamental evil the false opinions and notions which prevail concerning the extent as well as the contents and meaning of our Mitzvoth. In these isolated, uncomprehended tasks and duties Israel's essence is misunderstood, attacked, annihilated. At this spot the greatest stream flows away, and here the first effort should be made to repair the breach. When the demonstration has been given as to the special contents of Judaism, then the gaze may be lifted higher and the question be answered

as to the position which Judaism, as a whole, occupies in the series of other phenomena, what its relation to mankind, what the position of man in the world as comprehended from Judaism, what the relation of the world to God, of God to it. If the first part appeared first, people would look upon that which I say of Israel as a mere dream picture, a creation of the enthusiastic fancy, nowhere existing in reality. In order, however, to give my readers as much knowledge of the general as is absolutely necessary to the understanding of the special, I shall first sketch out some general outlines, such as I tried to give you in the beginning of our correspondence, and I have endeavored in the case of each particular Mitzvah to lead the reader to an understanding of its significance as based upon its relation to Judaism in general.

So much, perhaps more than too much, for this project in which you take such warm interest. May you, if its results be not altogether without blessing, remember with joy that in a time when your eye could have been

turned with so many sweet hopes entirely upon your own individual life, you had so much love for the general and universal. May the day on which you receive these lines be for you the founder of a joyful, active future. May the wife whom you to-day call "consecrated," be consecrated to you ever as your holiest possession. May the house which you establish together be pure and holy and godly, as the holy symbol of the "robe"¹ with which you enwrap yourselves. May the "cup of life"² from which you both shall drink, hold ever so much of the sweet that you shall never despair, so much of the bitter that you shall never grow over-proud; and may you accept all abundance of blessing as means given you by the hand of God, to live a life of righteousness and love. Farewell, my Benjamin, farewell. Your NAPHTALI.

THE END.

תם ונשלם שבח לאל בורא עולם

"It is finished and done, praised be God, Creator of the world."

¹ The Tallith טלית. ² The cup containing the wine of blessing

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